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MELTON DE MOWBRAY:

OR,

THE BANKER'S SON.

A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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MELTON DE MOWBRAY;

OR, THE

BANKER'S SON.

CHAPTER I.

THE MEETING AND PARTING.

“ Now I would speak the last farewell—but cannot.”

DRYDEN.

THERE is a civil way of doing a rude thing, from telling a man he squints, to telling him he is a rogue, and ought to be hung; there is, in short, a civil way of doing all things—the gentlemanlike way of arresting a gentleman, is to put that awful bit of parchment ycleped “ a writ ” into the hands of a respectable and civil officer, who proceeds therewith to the

solicitor of him against whom the proceedings are issued; undertakings are given, bail procured, and the matter is arranged with such delicacy and good breeding, that the gentleman has only to pay his lawyer, repay the fees to the officer, and consider himself arrested, without being disturbed from his dinner, ride, promenade, or pursuits, be they what they may.

Such courteous refinement was not, however, to the taste and understanding of Mr. Savage; this man had watched his opportunity till he thought the blow which he meditated would fall with the greatest force; to accomplish his ends, he had sought out an instrument suited to his black and evil mind, and the pettifogging dirty lawyer, had, of course, hands at his command worthy of his ruthless heart.

But self and self-preservation hold their influence over men whose feelings and conscience are equally hardened. Mowbray's stern, unlooked-for, and energetic resistance, made the bullies, bloated on the miseries of their fellows, tremble for the life thus grossly

fed ; and, though their instructions had been to serve the writs without regard to rank or person, their avarice suggested the wisdom of preserving a loophole of civility, through which they might beg a crown or two to reward their forbearance.

After the surrender with which we closed our last, poor Mowbray humbled himself to ask permission to return for a minute to the bedroom of his father. A surly acquiescence having been granted, he assured himself that Sir John was still sleeping, and having given to Bowman the necessary instructions, he seized his hat and gloves, and descended to his men in waiting.

Though it might be unwillingly paid, there was a something in Mowbray's manner which extorted respect ; the officers felt that they could not doubt his word, yet, such were their habits of caution, that one remained at the foot of the stairs, while the other, standing without the entrance door, kept his eye on the windows lest their prisoner should give them the slip.

“ We'd better step into a jarvey had'nt us,

Sur?” said one, addressing Mowbray as they stood in the court, and speaking with half civility.

“ I hates walking when I hav’nt to pay for riding ; it beant much more than a shilling to your lawyer’s in Chancery-lane,” added the other, to second the suggestion.

Mowbray hesitated for an answer, he shrunk from the idea of being gazed at in the public streets with such attendants at his elbows, yet recoiled still more strongly at the thoughts of such companions in a hackney coach, and, hoping to escape either of such trials, he begged to know whether he might proceed alone to his solicitors ?

“ That’s a likely joke !” said one, as he laughed and winked at his brother in office, and muttered to himself, “ he’s not such a young un after all.”

“ No, sir,” answered the one who took the lead, and was the more humanised of the two ; “ that can’t be : if *you* walks, *we* walks ; *you* rides, *we* rides. Tom always gets in *first* to see that our bird don’t make a thoroughfare of the coach, and fly out of one window as we

enter t'other. But we only wants to be civil, sir; I hopes to see the colour of your money, and so Tom and me can sit one side, and you on the other, and——”

“Do your duty; I prefer walking,” said Mowbray, cutting short this kind harangue; and, while summoning courage for the ordeal he was about to suffer, he put a crown-piece in the hand of each.

“I wouldn't much mind if I made Tom ride on the box,” said the leader, somewhat softened, and thinking, perhaps, no objection could be raised to the society of himself.

This sounded in Mowbray's ear like parading on the coach-box the banner of his own humiliation. “I prefer walking,” he repeated; and having given his word that he would make no attempt to escape, he raised his eyes to the windows of his father's room, and saw Bowman at one, the image of sorrow and compassion; he waved his hand, as if to motion him to his task, and nodding with what composure he could command, led the way to Chancery Lane.

The fee, and hopes of a second, had had

its weight ; the officers kept their eyes upon their man, but walked a few paces in the rear ; prepared, however, to rush like bull-dogs slipped from their collar, should their prey attempt to escape.

To one nursed in the lap of luxury, courted, flattered, petted, sought for in the best society ; to one, taught from infancy to deem himself the heir of countless thousands ; to one, a gentleman by birth, education, thought, and feeling, high in principle, and with a heart, though shrouded by the cold cuirass of fashion, keenly, exquisitely sensitive ;—to such a one, we can scarcely figure a position more painfully humiliating than that which our hero now fills. He saw, or fancied, that every eye was turned upon himself ; the thousands whom he met seemed to open a path for his advance, as if the plague were written in his face, and contagion in his touch ; his distinguished air, contrasted by the ruffians who dogged his heels, made him doubly conspicuous, and hundreds, with a heartless grin, paused to let him pass, or turned to gaze and sport their gibes. Little, little did they guess or fathom what was

passing beneath the calm exterior of the being they looked upon, who, had the pavement opened, and the swallowing earth withdrawn him from the living, would have felt it as a mercy. But a still severer trial awaited him.

Mowbray, by this time, was tolerably conversant with the windings of the city, and the frequent visits which he had made to Sir Launcelot Cappulet's chambers, had schooled him in the many and mysterious zig-zags which led into Chancery Lane—mazes into which, alas ! it is easier to enter than escape from ;—the dark and fitting types of the blackened veins which surround the heart of the law.

Diverging, with permission, from the beaten track of Cheapside, he had chosen a less conspicuous course through alleys and paths, with the names of which we will not horrify our readers. The sacred cause in which he suffered, inspired something of a martyr's courage, and like the column hurled from the height at which it stood, he acquired increasing strength as he hastened on his course ; he attempted,

and not altogether in vain, to busy and divert his mind from the torture under which, at first, he almost feared to sink. As, emerging from the city labyrinth, Smithfield opened on his right, instead of shrinking from a name vulgarised by its uses of to-day, he thought of that firmness which Christian martyrs, Papists as well as Protestants, had displayed to shame their anti-Christian murderers; and again, in the retirement of Cock Lane he thought of its immortal ghost. A few paces further, and as he passed a deep descent, slippery with blackened mud, he strove to smile at its misnomer of "Snow Hill;" and, as if any thing which pointed to the changes in the world harmonized with his own condition, his memory supplied words familiar to his school-boy days, *Color qui albus erat, nunc est contrarius albo*. But again he was about to tread the wide and open streets; again he was to be a thing for fellow-man to point at; and again, alas! he felt how difficult it was to force the mind from the trammels of one overwhelming and oppressive thought.

Poor Mowbray! like the stag driven from its covert, he had no alternative but to keep to the high and beaten track. As he ascended Holborn Hill, the iron tongue of St. Andrew's told the busy hour of three; the bell, the churchyard, a group of mourners, who, amidst the din and turmoil of the streets, watched a coffin which was sinking to the grave, arrested his attention; his thoughts flew to the deathbed of his father, and he unconsciously paused to look through the iron gates upon the scene before him.

"Come, sir, we shall be late," said one of the officers, slightly tapping Mowbray on his shoulder with a cane, and rousing him from his momentary abstraction.

The words and action drew the attention of all around: the passengers stared; the ragged, dirty children, who had gathered on the steps to indulge, as usual, in the fun of seeing a funeral, now turned their looks on Mowbray; and, precocious in vice and knowledge, "twigged" the case, and laughed to see *the gemman in limbo*, and doubly so as the slight touch of the officer's cane called

the rushing blood from its source, and dyed the pale cheeks with burning blushes.

Mowbray involuntarily clenched his hands ; and, as he fiercely turned upon the man who had thus insulted him, the first impulse was to strike him to the earth ; but, checking the angry intent, he wisely refrained from an act which would only have levelled himself with the ruffian brute he sought to punish. Giving one look of silent contempt, he continued to ascend the hill at a pace which left no cause to complain of delay.

Oh ! how he longed to outstrip those fat and bloated men in office, “to flee away and be at rest !” and, as mindful of his words, and dreading a second and louder appeal, he slackened his steps. How bitterly was the present contrasted with the past ! He now recalled how, but a few years since, he had sometimes condescended to tread the pavement of the city, as if it were made for himself alone, and the boy, his friend, whom scarlet, gold, and a sword, had made a man and officer ; how well he remembered the feelings of proud disdain with which he then eyed the

stream of population as it parted right and left, and fled before the grenadiers who led the guard which was daily marched to the Bank of England: in those days he had despised the base plebeians, as the scum and foam which is flung aside by the prow of some royal barge; and now, in his turn, he was the laughing-stock of those whom once he had scarcely deigned to notice.

Such lessons — bitter, galling, though they be — are not without their use: they teach patrician clay to feel that chance alone has robbed it “with a brief authority;” that the chances of to-morrow may reduce it to the level of the lowly born; and, above all, that death must and will restore equality to all of woman born.

But, in giving Mowbray’s reflections, we also wished to record how, in the days of “Fox, Pitt, Wilkes, and Liberty,” the citizens and people quietly submitted to have their narrow pavements swept of the *canaille* by a company of soldiers, commanded, though not headed, by a boy, who might invite two friends to dine at the Bank, and drink as much wine

as they could. Things are better ordered now : the guard, if marched from the West instead of the Tower, passes in single file ; and the young officer and his friends are confined to *one bottle each*.

To pass from this digression, to which our hero has unwittingly led us, we return to those bitter reflections, from which he so acutely suffered, while enduring one of the many lessons he was doomed to learn ; and such was the melancholy occupation of his mind, when a dashing equipage cut between the stand of coaches, and, as if it brooked not delay, caused by the unloading of a wagon, or some such vulgar incident, it continued its eastern flight on the right ; or, speaking in the language of the whip-club, on the wrong side of the street.

In its way, the style of the approaching equipage was as marked and distinct from its fellows as Mowbray himself from the sheriff's officers. As it suddenly dashed into sight, and threaded its skilful course, he raised his eyes, and hailed an object which divided the attention that had hitherto been

so painfully engrossed by his thoughts; the next moment his eyes and feet were rivetted; the next, he cast a hurried glance around: he meditated flight; he looked, but in vain, for some lane or alley through which he might glide unseen. The officers appeared to read his intentions; and, while they kept close to his side, pointed straight forward as the path he was to pursue.

“Then it must be so,” he said, half aloud, as he made a desperate effort to preserve his self-possession; and, shrinking within himself, as if he felt it were possible to lessen his commanding figure, he hoped, he prayed, that he might pass unnoticed by the Marchioness of Blankisle’s carriage.

It was too late: ere the wish had been formed, or the prayer uttered, the eyes of the kind-hearted marquess had caught sight of his former favourite; the check-string was pulled, and the marquess himself, with more warmth of feeling than regard to forms, put his head from the window, and cried, “Stop!” with an oath more English than courtly.

The coachman, more master of himself

than his noble lord, squared his elbows ; and, in compliance with the urgent command, brought his horses on their haunches without discomposing a muscle of his face, a curl of his wig, or a point of his tri-cornered hat.

“ Mowbray, my dear Mowbray ! ” exclaimed the marquess, as the carriage came to a halt ; and, at the same moment, he beckoned to him with his finger.

By this time, one of the two sleek, long footmen, had descended from the stand behind, and, though he cursed the city in his heart as he picked his way in peril to his silk stockings, he proceeded in his duty ; and, as if all the suite were more possessed than his lordship, he motioned to the coachman with his gold-headed cane, and directed him to pull up at the edge of the footway.

Mowbray saw the polite intention ; and, finding the recognition inevitable, he turned to the officers, and having whispered, “ only for a moment,” he darted to the carriage ere it could reach the pavement, on which, as usual, an idle crowd was instantly gathered.

“ Give me your hand, Melton, my dear

boy! I am so glad to have met you," said the marquess, as he extended his arm through the window which his bust nearly filled.

"And how are you? and what are you doing? and how is my old friend, Sir John? So they're making a man of business of you at last; and how are things getting on?" said the marquess, while he still pressed Mowbray's hand with affection, and gave him no opportunity of reply. "And how ——" he repeated, as he was about to add to his string of inquiries, when, suddenly checking himself, he released the hand he had so warmly grasped, and, turning round, said, — "Why, Helen, my child, here's Melton! — don't you see him?"

"I hope to do so, papa, when the blind is removed," answered Lady Helen, as she faintly attempted to resume the playful archness of former days, and leant towards the window which as yet had been screened by the marquess.

"Is Lady Helen there?" said Mowbray, as, seizing the handle of the door, and forgetting all but the silver tones which had

fallen on his ear, he threw back the barrier which had concealed the form he idolised.

“Speak to him, my love,” said the marquess, as, for the instant, he mistook the prostration caused by the depth of Lady Helen’s feeling for the cold-blooded pride of the marchioness.

“Melton,” said Lady Helen, in a voice scarcely audible; and, while all other words died upon her lips, the pressure of her fairy fingers, and, above all, the mystic volume of her dark expressive eyes, spoke more than words could have told: it seemed as if, in that one look, the interval of time had been supplied, a blank removed — as if their thoughts and sufferings since last they parted were revealed at once.

“But, Melton,” said Lady Helen, as she made an effort to speak, and strove to smile, “you have not answered one of papa’s inquiries: are you ill? — indeed you look as if you were.”

“He does indeed,” said the marquess, who by this time, had recovered the power of

observation ; “ you are right, Helen. I fear, Mowbray, your health has suffered from confinement. Tell us — say, are you not ill ? ”

“ I am quite well, my dear lord ; but, Sir John, if of him you inquired, my poor father *is dying !* ” As Mowbray pronounced these two words, his eyes were fixed on Lady Helen’s ; and they spoke more plainly than his quivering lips, how much of agony and despair was in his heart.

“ And are you obliged to leave him ? ” asked Lady Helen, who knew the heart whose sorrows she read.

“ Business,” answered Mowbray, who, for a few brief moments, had forgotten his actual position, and which this question recalled with agonising force — “ yes, business beyond control has torn me from my father’s side, and now must plead for leaving you. My dear, kind marquess, a thousand thanks for your warmth of greeting ; and to you, dear Lady Helen — ”

“ Nay, but you shall not leave us yet,” said the marquess, interrupting Mowbray, and

withdrawing the hand which he was about to take: "I insist upon driving you to Lombard Street. Thomas, let the steps down. I've much to say, much to explain: so has Helen, if she could but find her speech."

"Impossible, indeed, indeed, my lord; I cannot, indeed, I — I ——"

"No denial, Mowbray," said the marquess, who misconstrued Mowbray's distracted hesitation: "I tell you I am going to the India House; Lombard Street is all in the way. As to Rundell's, where I promised the marchioness to call, and shew Helen her cousin's wedding jewels, why, we'll call in our way back. Come, Mowbray, step in. You know Lady Blankisle, my dear wife. Come, come, we may not have another opportunity; take a seat, and you'll be so much sooner with your poor father."

"Do, Melton; I pray you, do!" said a voice from the corner of the carriage, in the sweetest tone that persuasion ever wore, but so low and soft, that no ear but Mowbray's heard it.

He looked at Lady Helen, and paused in his utter wretchedness ere he could pronounce the bitterness of refusal.

At this moment, one of the officers who approached unnoticed, put his hand on his prisoner's shoulder. As yet, they had continued passive spectators, won, perhaps, to something like respect by the blazoned arms and lordly equipage, and not sorry to recover breath after mounting the hill at a pace ill suited to their bulk; but now, whether their patience were exhausted, whether their love of tyranny prevailed, whether they recalled their employer's cruel injunctions of severity, or were really alarmed at seeing the steps lowered, they decided upon taking their man in hand; and the one who had laid his mutton fist on Melton de Mowbray's shoulder said, "Come, sir, your minutes are mighty long; we've another job in hand, and can't wait no longer!"

"Begone, you accursed ruffian!" cried Mowbray, roused beyond control by this insulting appeal in the presence of the marquess and his gentle daughter, and, at the same

time, removing the fellow's hand with a jerk which nearly threw the shoulder from its socket.

“For Heaven's sake, speak! forbear, Melton, I implore you, forbear! Speak, say who are the ruffians that thus insult you? They are, they must be unworthy! For my sake, I entreat you be calm!” exclaimed Lady Helen, who, with energies and pride, suddenly awakened, found words at once to express her sense of the insult, and yet endeavoured to recall Mowbray to himself as he struggled to break away from the two officers, who had resented his opposition by seizing his arms.

“Gentlemen, I submit! leave me at liberty for three minutes, and I will ask your pardon, and pray for forgiveness,” said Mowbray, as he ceased to struggle, and bit through the inner surface of his lip, while he stifled the effort those words had cost him. “My dear marquess,” he continued, when equal to the calmness he wished to assume, “you see I am neither master of myself, nor of my movements; in a few hours I hope to be free, at present I am—under arrest!”

“ Is it possible ! can I be of any use, Mowbray ? Tell me, do you require bail ? ” asked the kind-hearted marquess, while Lady Helen sunk back to conceal the shock which Mowbray’s words inflicted.

“ My solicitor will arrange it quickly ; indeed, it is nothing, and your kind offer is needless. All will end well ; it is as nothing—nothing to the pain which, it seems, I am doomed to occasion your family. Forgive me, and while I treasure the sympathy you have shewn me this day, try to forget how unwillingly I have crossed your path, and may it never be again ; a thousand thanks, and and a thousand times—farewell ! ”

The commencement of these parting words were spoken with a light and cheerful air, calculated to remove anxiety for his actual situation ; but, ere he reached “ farewell,” gratitude and grief had mellowed his tone till it thrilled through the old lord’s bosom, and brought tears to his eyes as he took Mowbray’s hand and said, “ Good bye, God bless you, my dear Melton ! ”

“ Lady Helen,” said Mowbray, as he ex-

tended his hand beyond the marquess to the beloved daughter by his side, “there seems to be a spell upon our parting, a curse against the prayer, the all I have left to offer, or wish to utter. Helen, dearest Helen!” he continued, in a tone inaudible to all but herself, “to speak now were profanation; fare thee well! Adieu! forgive the misery I have caused; may Heaven grant the blessings and support which now I dare not ask for. Helen, farewell for ever!”

“Stay one moment, stay” said Lady Helen faintly, as she still retained the hand which Mowbray, with gentle force, endeavoured to withdraw: “we may never meet again, and I—I wished—you may have wronged me!”

“Never—never! I read thee—I know thee! gentle, guileless, and unspotted!” answered Mowbray, with deep, impassioned fervour; and then, smiling through the cloud which darkened the present and future, he added, as he gave one fond pressure to the hand he was about to resign for ever—“Now, Lady Helen, you must release your prisoner;

there are sterner claims, but *these* will quickly pass. Grant one favour—if you cannot forget the scene you have witnessed, promise to remember the poor prisoner was *humbled*, not *degraded*!”

Lady Helen’s lips strove to say, “ I do—I will—I feel—I know it!” but language failed in the intensity of feeling; and once more the dark full eyes spoke for the pale and frozen lips.

Mowbray turned from the carriage, and, followed by the officers, pursued his way to Chancery Lane; the pampered, heartless menial, put up the steps, and closed the door with fashionable indifference. Having given his lordship’s order to proceed to the India House, he joined in his fellow-servant’s laugh and jokes, which they freely vented behind their master’s back. The coachman’s hour of mirth was postponed: whatever might have been the inclination, it was suppressed beneath the wisdom of the wig; his head was turned with the steadiness of a statue towards his horses’ ears.

The scene we have endeavoured to record

was so sudden, so unlooked-for, so unlike the realities of his former life, that Mowbray had scarcely proceeded fifty yards, ere he almost doubted his own identity, and fancied it was but a dream.

“Have I seen her? have we met? and has she witnessed my public degradation?” were questions which arose in that bitter moment of doubt; but, as he once looked back to see if it could be possible, his eyes fell upon the well-known carriage; he saw the two footmen turned towards the crowd which followed at his heels; he marked the devilish laugh upon their faces, and felt as if a poisoned spear had entered his soul as a long, glittering cane, was suddenly pointed towards himself. He doubted no longer, and never was port more welcome to the bark pursued by a pirate crew, than the sheltering office of Mr. Plastic, solicitor to the house of Messrs. D’Aubigny and Co.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRISON-HOUSE, AND DEATH.

“ ————— O give me liberty !
For, were even Paradise itself my prison,
Still I should long to leap the crystal walls.”

“ Death to a man in misery is sleep.”

DRYDEN.

MR. PLASTIC has already been presented to the reader in the chambers of Sir Launcelot Cappulet ; if we remember rightly, this was his first appearance in public, though, it may be readily imagined, that many and long visits had been previously paid to Lombard Street : lawyers, like the Irish peasantry, flock when and where there is the chance of a harvest ; or, rather, they hover round the fallen, like vultures on an army whose track is ruin. .

As Mr. Plastic will fill a more important part in the destinies of our hero than enrolling the deed he had prepared, it may be as well to summon him before our easel, and endeavour, with a few touches, to hit him off.

He was a man about fifty ; and, but for his saintly air, might have passed for the gentleman in black ; his eyes were black, his heart was black, black specks were on his teeth, and black borders round his nails. Then, moreover, his coat and waistcoat were black, his short kneed breeches, his long silk stockings, his knee-buckles, shoe-buckles, and shoes—all were black ; in short, if we except a white stock, a white shirt, white ruffles, and the whites of his upturned eyes, he was the blackest man we ever saw : we have heard, to be sure, that his liver was also white, but being painters, and not anatomists, we do not pretend to vouch for the fact.

This black limb of Satan—we beg pardon, of the law—what could have put the devil in our heads ?—was the son of nobody knew whom ; upon his very birth and parentage there hung a black impenetrable cloud. No-

thing more is known than the act of the good Samaritan, his late partner and honest predecessor, who raised the unclaimed urchin from the kennel, and fed, clothed, and cherished him beneath his roof. In the course of time the boy became a man; he had copied law till he thought he understood it; his protector thought the same, and admitted him to partnership. Soon after this, his flesh quickened with the spirit of the tender passion, and he made love, in the kitchen or coalhole, to his partner's scullery-maid; alas for the frailty of human nature! the man was unwise, the maid undone; it came to the ears of his upright patron, and he insisted that Miss Sally Clout should be made Mrs. Plastic, and — an honest woman. The seducer looked black, but his patron was inexorable; the holy bands of matrimony were to be performed, and the lady elevated from the scullery to the parlour. In the course of years, a progeny of little black imps came to light: and Mr. Plastic, for the sake of those dear ties of flesh and blood, redoubled his efforts in fleecing

and fawning on all those whom he pretended to serve.

The lawyer we are now sketching was, in all but one respect, the very opposite of the man employed by Savage. Our man was sleek, polished, and insinuating as the serpent which glided in Eden ; and, as he inherited the connexion of his deceased partner, and ran up his bills in the most quiet, gentlemanlike way imaginable, it is not to be wondered at that he throve prodigiously : in fact, the only difficulty was to get a bill at all from him, excepting at grand climacterics, such, for instance, as a client's death, the sale of his property, his insolvency, and so forth, on which occasions it was either impossible to dispute the account, or unwise to do so, as the title-deeds were held as a lien till the bill was paid. Then, again, he could quote Scripture as freely as he could Blackstone, and quite as much to suit his own purpose ; he was, in fine, in the much used, though misused language of the day, a saint, or, what was then more frequently termed, a Methodist.

Such was the oily knave to whom Mowbray fled, or rather was led captive, for assistance; but, the bark to which he has been likened, in his anxiety to escape from the jeers which pursued his footsteps and jarred upon his ear; was threatened with wreck ere the port was reached.

“Stop, *sur*, this is the house,” cried one of the officers, coming up to Mowbray, when in a narrow street leading to Chancery Lane, and within a few hundred yards of Mr. Plastic’s office.

“Indeed, you are mistaken!” answered Mowbray, with surprise, as his eyes first looked at the street door which was wide open, then at an inner glazed door in the narrow passage, ornamented with strong iron bars on the one side and a green curtain on the other; “Indeed you’re mistaken!” he repeated, as his eyes passed from the passage to the exterior of the house, and he saw every window strongly barred on the outside.

“No, Mr. *Mowbree*, I can’t be very well mistaken, for this is where I mostly lives, and every bird knows its own nest; and you can be

very well accommodated, Mr. *Mowbree*, with all what you wants,—wine, dinner, or what not, till your '*torney* bails you, and we're always civil to gentlemen as behaves as such—this way, *sur*."

"What do you mean, my good fellow?" asked Mowbray, who saw that the man's manner was changed to civility, though in ignorance as to its selfish motive.

"Mean! Mr. *Mowbree*, why don't you know a lock-up house when you sees it? Very nice apartments, *sur*;—let you have a room to yourself—be as comfortable as by your own fireside in Lombard Street."

"Merciful Heaven!" cried Mowbray, with an involuntary shudder, as the truth flashed across his mind, and his thoughts pictured his father dying while he was confined by locks and bars—until that moment such a possibility had not occurred. They alone who, taken by the chance of war, wrecked by misfortune, or worse, by the bloody whirlpool of their passions, have been deprived of liberty, and looked with despair upon the cold and massive bars of a prison; they alone know the value of

the jewel they have lost—they alone know how the sparrow chirping on the house-top—the fly which passes to and fro—nay, how the very beggar, sueing from door to door for crumbs of bread, is envied, by comparison, by the wretched in confinement. The heart may harden—feelings may grow callous as the bar of iron; but the first impression on one born to independence and reared in luxury, when first deprived of liberty, can never, never be forgotten by those who have felt it, and never imaged by those who happily have known it not.

“Merciful Heaven! you cannot mean it,” cried Mowbray, and with such an expression of intense and powerful suffering, that the very gaoler felt a qualm of conscience; this, seconded by the thoughts of making more by one so green and sensitive, induced him to consult with his fellow, and propose that they should go with their prisoner to Mr. Plastic’s office.

“I don’t know what to say to that,” replied the ruffian, who was immovable by aught save self-interest. “You know, Mr. Savage savaged us in Holborn for letting our

prisoner stop and speak to a lord, and he promised a guinea if we did our duty well."

"I will double it," cried Mowbray, who overheard the answer. "I will pay you what you ask, if you will but spare the prison-house, and take me to my attorney: it is but a step hence."

"Why, there's something in that to be sure; the gemman seems to be rational now, Tom."

Tom nodded assent to this, and with a knowing wink, he whispered that they were sure to be fee'd on both sides, "For Master Savage said he'd seen enough of the fun, and was a-going home to his dinner."

In a few minutes from this, the treacherous port was reached, and Mowbray stood in the private office of Mr. Plastic, while his kind guardians lolled in the adjoining room.

"Is it possible, in a Christian land?" repeated Mr. Plastic from time to time, as he shewed the whites of his black eyes, and the black tips of his white hands which were raised and joined, as in the act of prayer, while Mowbray explained his business.

“It is,” answered Mowbray, drily, for he neither liked the man nor his manner; though, from respect to his father, who had employed the firm for years, and left his deeds in their charge, he could have gone to no other, had he known one; “and now I beg you to obtain my release as quickly as may be.”

“In truth, my Christian friend, we should be meek and patient; whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth; but we will wrestle with this Savage, whose bowels know no compassion, and escape from his toils.”

“Can you be bail for me?” inquired Mowbray; who knew enough of the law of arrest to be aware that bail was necessary.

“Providence is all-wise, my afflicted friend, and I grieve to say, that by my articles of partnership I am bound to be bail for no one; but, as the Scripture saith ——”

There was a rap at the door, and before Mr. Plastic brought out a drawling quotation to his purpose, in popped the pimpled face of Mr. Willain, the accomptant, whose tongue opened as rapidly as the door.

“Beg pardon — how do, Plastic — how do,

Mr. Mowbray—called in Lombard Street—heard what was going on—why didn't you come to me?—my brother had settled it in a crack. Come here to ask where they'd skewered you (he probably meant *secured*)—better have come to me—Plastic is too genteel for this work, and slow as a snail.”

“Live and let live—do as you'd be done by, Mr. Vil—that is, Mr. Willain,” said Mr. Plastic, with readiness, when he saw the accountant was anxious to benefit his brother by a new client. “When the spirit of charity stirs within, I can gird my loins, and run the race with any man. To the point, sir—will you be bail for the friend you've sought.”

“I'm no housekeeper—won't take me—only a lodger—first floor, one pair of stairs—and no snail like you, with a house over my head; but you, Plastic, and my friend, Sir Launcelot Cappulet, can do the job in a trice,” said Willain, rattling on with his wonted and blushless effrontery.

“My articles prevent me; but your brother, perhaps, for the love of——”

“Whew!” cried Mr. Willain, who saw it

was diamond cut diamond, though one was polished, the other rough ; and, having withdrawn the finger, which had been laid by the side of his nose for a note of admiration to accompany his exclamation, he added,—“Well, if that’s how the land lies, let’s go to Sir Launcelot’s, or you give an undertaking, and let me talk to the bull-dogs. I know how to stop their mouths. The king’s head is as good as a calf’s, and better, too, to their stomach ;” so saying, he retired to the back office, and shortly made terms with the officers.

“Is it possible, in a Christian land ?” exclaimed Plastic once more, with its usual accompaniments, as Willain left the room. “Mammon is his god ; his heart is hardened : the ruthless, vulgar sinner knows not the luxury of weeping with those who weep.” Here one of the few white things, which we omitted in making the catalogue of this black man, was produced in the shape of a handkerchief, which was applied to the face to conceal the want of tears.

Hitherto Mowbray, fearful of causing de-

lay in a matter of which he knew not the ways and means, had preserved a total silence, as he listened to the discussion of his advisers, and the question of obtaining bail. How many of the hundreds, whom he once called "friends," of the great and titled in the world of fashion, passed in review before his mind's eye; and how few, alas! were there amongst the many to whom he felt he could appeal with the least chance of success!—how heartless and unprofitable appeared the ties he had made, the hours he had squandered! These reflections, linked, as they were, with the main object in view, allowed him little leisure to attend to the blunt coarseness of the one party, or cant of the other: he was but the instrument in the hands of others, and he could not help it. The hundreds expended at the colleges of Oxford and Eton, had left him but a child in general and useful knowledge; he was like one who had grown to man's estate, and had never been permitted to exercise his legs. With an old head upon his shoulders, he was, and felt that he was, obliged to go in leading-strings. Such feel-

ings, however, were interrupted by Plastic's bare-faced, or rather smooth-faced, attempt to shed tears of compassion.

"I am no weeper, Mr. Plastic," said Mowbray drily; "and if I were, this is neither the hour nor spot for such display. To business, if you please; let us hasten to Sir Launcelot Cappulet's chambers."

"Verily, I can rejoice with those who are glad," said the pliant Mr. Plastic, with a smile; and, blowing his nose instead of wiping his tearless eyes, he changed his note, and complimented his Christian friend upon his cheerful fortitude in affliction.

But we leave the reader to fill up the sketch; and, without repeating the moral lessons on the changes in this world of wo with which Mr. Plastic always larded his law, we will say, that, ere long, our hero was set at liberty; and confess that he paid as little attention as, probably, our reader would do, to good advice when out of season.

Having escaped the horrors of actual imprisonment, the heart and spirits of Mowbray bounded as he broke from the clutches of

the law. Like a bird rescued from the talons of a kite, he flew, rather than walked, to the Temple stairs, darted into a boat, and, with the tide in his favour, was shortly landed at Dowgate Wharf, from which he cut across to Lombard Street, and, in a few minutes, reached the entrance to Vine Street Court.

Few things are more soothing to the troubled spirit than gliding rapidly with the stream, when seated in what Spenser would term “a little gondelay;” while,

“ ——— swift as glance of eye,
It cuts away upon the yielding wave.”

We know no spot where such influence can be more powerfully felt than in that portion of the Thames which flows through the heart of London. Busy, stirring, crowded though the scene may be, it is silence — a calm and desert, compared to the din and bustle of the streets; and to Mowbray, as he looked on the deep stream which divided him from the contact and eyes of others, he felt as if he

had escaped from purgatory to the haven where the wretched may rest in peace. By degrees, the stormier passions of hatred, anger, and revenge, were lulled to sleep; forgetting and forgiving the ignominy to which his little-minded creditor had exposed him (the jeers of a heartless crowd), better and sacred feelings of filial love possessed his mind, and turned his thoughts to the sufferings of the dying father, whom he had been compelled to leave.

Mowbray had no sooner emerged from the dark passage leading to the gloomy court, than his arm was seized by Bowman, who, for some time past, had been pacing backwards and forwards like a sentinel.

“Halt, sir!—stop!—my dear Mr. Melton, let me beg you to be calm,” he said, yet speaking with any thing but the composure he wished to instil.

“What has happened?—tell me: speak Bowman,” cried Mowbray, more alarmed by the agitation he remarked than soothed by the words he heard.

“Be calm, sir, I implore you: I have

watched your return to prepare you. He's gone, sir."

"Who — what! — my poor father! — have the ruffians dared to drag him from his bed?" exclaimed Mowbray, with increasing agony, as he fancied that violence had been offered in seeking Sir John de Mowbray's person.

"No, sir — no, sir! I would have died rather than suffer that to be."

"Then why detain me? — why not speak? — why did you leave your post?" and, without waiting for reply, Mowbray was about to rush to his father's bed-room, when once more Bowman endeavoured to arrest his steps, and said,

"He is dead, sir; I fear your poor father is dead!"

"Dead!" cried Mowbray, echoing the word, and pausing in his course as if his limbs were paralysed. "Dead!" he repeated, looking steadfastly in Bowman's face.

"Yes, sir, I fear it is all over; and I wished to prepare you ere you entered his chamber."

"Dead! and I not by to watch and soothe the last moments of my broken-hearted

father! Did he not ask for me?" inquired Mowbray quickly, as the thought occurred, and he dropped the hands which he had clasped and raised in an agony of despair.

"Yes, sir; he called upon your name, he commanded, he entreated us to fetch you to his side: he reproached me with ingratitude, and accused me of cruelty and falsehood, when I strove to conceal the truth and excuse your absence."

"Did he think I had deserted him? — did he accuse me of neglect?"

"Neither, neither, sir. 'He would not leave me, I know he would not! My son! where is my son?' he cried, with strength of speech which he had not shewn for weeks."

"Say on, say on — tell me all."

"He thought you ill, exhausted, and insisted upon being borne to your room, and knowing the worst."

"And you ——"

"Yes, sir," said Bowman, reading the question which faltered on the tongue, "I thought it better to speak the truth, and assured him you would shortly return."

“ What said he ? ”

“ ‘ My poor child ! and had they the heart !
—I had much to say ; but God’s will be
done ! ’ and with these words his head fell
back, his strength appeared to fail, and he
has never spoken since — I fear, sir, it is all
over.”

They who have watched by the bed of a
dying parent, and known the feelings which
that sacred task creates—they who have
watched and watched, soothed and tended
the dying until the spirit fled—they alone
know—we will not say the happiness, but the
relief, the consolation, to the orphan’s heart,
when, recalling the full devotion of that me-
lancholy duty, they remember that to the
last no succour, no kindness, was omitted
or neglected ; and such alone can fully under-
stand with what a heavy heart Mowbray as-
cended the stairs which led to his father’s
bed-room.

Old Martha, whom the reader may re-
member to have seen in Grosvenor Square,
had supplied the post which Bowman had
quitted with the intention of breaking the

shock which awaited the son of his beloved patron. The shutters were back, the window-curtains drawn up; for there was, alas! no cause to dread the glare of day: lightning may strike, but cannot dazzle the blind. It seemed as if "the sunny day," for which Sir John had prayed, ere his hopes had perished, had come to welcome the departing spirit; yet so intently was Martha engaged in her watch, so silent were the sorrowing footsteps of Mowbray, that she was unconscious of his approach until his shadow fell upon the bed.

"Hush! hush!" she whispered in an under tone, suddenly turning her head and speaking, as if she had been disturbed by sound instead of shadow — "hush!" she repeated — "he has moved — he is not gone."

"Thank God!" cried Mowbray internally; and, repeating his silent thanks to the mercy of the Almighty, he motioned Martha to resign her place, and, while he vainly strove to quiet the throbbing pulses of his heart, which, in speed and sound, outstripped the ticking watch, he gazed upon the wreck before him, and watched for the signs of life.

Sir John was lying on his back, his head supported by the pillow, from which it had never moved since Bowman spoke: his eyes were closed, his arms were extended, his hands linked together and resting on the bed-clothes, as if they had been raised with one expiring effort, and dropped to rise no more. Melton placed one hand on his father's — they were cold as ice: he leant forward, and tried to catch the warmth or sound of breath — he felt, or fancied that he felt it: he applied his lips to the sleeper's ear, and, as if he trembled to awaken the dead, he whispered, "My father! my father!" and then again, in a louder tone, as he convulsively clasped the cold hands within his own, — "My father, speak!"

As starting from a dream, the sightless orbs were suddenly displayed; the cold hands, releasing their clasp, seized upon the hand which had rested on them, and, after one or two fruitless efforts, Sir John de Mowbray uttered, "My son! my son! Melton, my child! is it you?"

"'Tis I, my father, speak to me again —

bless me : say what your son can do," answered Melton, while all the weakness of a child came over him.

"Heaven is merciful — kiss me, my son!" said Sir John, though speaking with difficulty ; and, after a pause of some minutes, he added, — "Closer — kneel by me — my voice is failing: I had much to say, but 'tis too late; I — I shall shortly rest. You, my poor boy — but, Melton, forgive your persecutors ; and if ever — if ever — you meet *her*, remember she was your mother — say, I forgive and promise to protect, to shield her from ——. Promise, promise!" he faintly added, though unable to complete the sentence.

"Solemnly, willingly, I promise to be all that I may be — to sacrifice my life, could I screen her from the world."

"Enough! — a father's blessing, my child! — 'tis all I have! *There* must be your reward, and *there* — hope — to — again ——" These words were unintelligible in themselves ; but their meaning was translated by an arm, fleshless as the arm of death, which, with the last effort of nature, pointed to the clear blue

skies, and then fell lifeless on the neck of Melton de Mowbray — his father was no more ; or, in the touching language of the Psalmist, “ his tongue clove unto his gums, and he was brought into the dust of death.”

CHAPTER III.

REACTION — LETTERS OF CONDOLENCE AND
THE BURIAL.

“ O take me in, a fellow-mourner with thee !

I'll number groan for groan, and tear for tear.”

DRYDEN.

HAD we inclination, it were difficult to pursue the melancholy theme which closed our preceeding chapter. Difficult, did we say ? nay, it were impossible to portray the deep and varied feelings to which the trials of one day had exposed the hero of our tale.

Within four-and-twenty hours, within a brief portion of “ one little day,” poor Mowbray had been brought in contact with men, coarse and vulgar by birth ; with ruffians, hardened and callous to the woes of others, as the butcher to the bleating of the lamb. With such, the tools of those who trade and

fatten on misfortune, he had been led to struggle, yet driven by necessity to wear their yoke; he had been torn from the bed by which he held his sacred vigil, and soothed the last moments of an expiring parent; he had been paraded through the streets as a thing at which the base, the worthless, and unfeeling, might wag their tongues and laugh to scorn; at a time when he was bowed down with sorrow, degraded, humbled to the dust, he had met her to whom, in the bright promise of yesterday, he had pledged his adoration; and, in the public highway of the city, amidst the gaze of the idle, the jeers of the heartless, he bade adieu for ever to the pure and lovely being who had confessed her love, and resigned to his keeping the treasure of her first affections. Within a little time, and in the rapid changes of these harrowing scenes, we see him kneeling by the bed from which the iron hand of the law had torn him, weeping over the father when his voice had waked him from the slumbers of the dying, catching at the words which he arrived too late to hear; and, finally, closing those eyes which still ap-

peared a mockery of vision, and binding the falling jaw to restore to those lips a firmness of character which had never failed till death had conquered, and which, ere long, death itself would set for ever in its icy stiffness.

So much within a little, may seem within itself the volume of a life ; years and years of lesser griefs, hours and hours of pleasantry, may be forgotten and absorbed in such a day. We have mentioned it was one of those clear, bright, and sunny atmospheres, which so rarely visit the capital of England ; but this, alas ! so far from cheering, made the contrast doubly strong. As the blackest type is strengthened by the purest page of white, so in proportion was the record of those scenes vividly engraved upon the memory of Mowbray. Every spot, every minute, marked by some new or changing torture, were indelibly fixed ; all things were brought to light that could stamp association, and he felt that, should he live to eternity, neither future happiness nor future sorrow, nothing within the womb of time, could erase or weaken the impression of that one memorable day. But it is a volume on

which we will not dwell ; the reader has the outlines, the headings of the chapters, and may pause to fill up the details from his own heart, or accompany us as we journey onwards in the course we tread.

Mowbray, if he wept like a child for the father he had lost, felt like a man the high responsibility which had now devolved on himself alone. If he sometimes had the weakness to think of Lady Helen Fawndove ; if, when wearied with the toils of the day, and shrouded by the midnight hour, he sometimes pressed to his lips the lock of hair which spoke of her who, though on earth, was also lost to him ; if then a tear escaped amidst despair, such weakness was undreamt of by the world. The duties of each coming day were met with firmness ; he was ever at his post ; and every thought and every energy was directed to the efforts of doing justice to his creditors, to the hopes of escaping from that most humiliating of slavery and thralldom — debt.

Consistent with the rigid system of economy which Mowbray had adopted for the

present, and still more strongly in pursuance of his father's solemn injunctions, the preparations for interment were directed to be the simplest possible. "The only homage," Sir John had often said, "worthy of the dead is the prayer, it may be, the tear, of those who still survive; and if these forget us while we live, who would value this tribute when they play the hypocrite, and flock as mourners over him they had deserted? No, my son; at best, the pomps of burial are but a melancholy satire, and too often but the proud vanity of the living, who outrage the sense and wishes of the dead. Had I died in brighter days, I should have said the same, and yet, perhaps, been followed by a heartless train; now, it needs not be, let none pollute the homage of sincerity. I have proved the world; to those who fed at my board, and borrowed from my hand, I am as one already swallowed up in death. So let it be: one tear of thine, Melton, shall outweigh the show of thousands, and be all that I could ask while yet the power remains!"

Thus, or in words to that effect, had Sir

John frequently discoursed on the subject of his decease, and strove to familiarise his son to the event which he clearly foresaw; and, at the same time, took the opportunity of inculcating the inestimable value of one true friend, if such were ever found.

Sir John had lived in the world, and knew it well; he had had his friends, men worthy of the name; but the hallowed few had preceded himself to the bourn "whence no traveller returns."

As a matter of course, Sir John de Mowbray's death was inserted in the daily papers; if, on the contrary, they had stated that he had risen from the grave, the news could scarcely have made more sensation in the fashionable world. Dukes, lords, and gentles, were awakened to sudden sympathy; even some tottering old dowagers, who had purchased their long-envied *bijoux* in Grosvenor Square, exclaimed, "Poor dear Sir John! Who would have thought that he would have followed so soon? Do you think, my dear countess, we shall have another sale?"

"Poor dear man!" replied the countess,

with the empty echo of sorrow, “ I should not wonder. I’m greatly shocked, arn’t you, duchess? He had such taste — so refined — I dare say he has kept something back, and we shall have it now ! ”

“ A sad thing ! ” rejoined the duchess ; “ I was quite startled ; for, do you know ” — lowering her voice as she spoke — “ I thought the poor man was dead ; I am positive I read the loss —— ”

“ Of his eyesight,” cried Lady Crabstick, an ancient, blue-blackish wit, who always loved to put her sister right. “ You make such mistakes, my dear ! I wonder who is the executor ? ”

“ And where he will be buried ? I shall persuade his grace to attend the funeral, he may hear something. I should so like that picture by Sir Joshua ; that, I do know, has not been sold. How provoking that poor Reynolds was not spared a little longer ; the value will be doubled now the artist is dead ! ”

That same day and hour, his grace the duke did write a letter of condolence, and

requested permission to honour the remains of his late friend by attending the funeral. With or without feminine suggestion, lords and gentles did the same; and Mowbray, who had felt that, with the exception of the devoted Bowman, he was alone and forgotten in the world, was suddenly reminded of the station he had once held by a rapid succession of letters addressed to "Sir Melton de Mowbray, Bart., &c. &c." from men who were anxious to pay this last duty to one whom they so sincerely lamented. To one and all a polite refusal was returned. The blaze of coronets had been less substantial than that of the funeral pile, which, mingling with the ashes of the body it consumes, becomes sacred and worthy of preservation; the other, the glare and glitter of the moment would pass, like the *ignis fatuus* which rises from corruption, dazzles the ignorant, dies away, and is seen no more. If Melton de Mowbray had once been dazzled, he was wiser now, and despised the outpourings of tenderness offered to a senseless corpse by those from whom the

shadow of kindness to the living body might have weighed like gold in the hour of adversity.

There was, however, one exception amidst the many forms of wo ; there was one letter warm from the heart ; pure, though rough as the diamond untouched by the lapidary : and, as it came from one for whom, in our earlier pages, we besought the good opinion of our readers, we shall lay this honourable exception before them.

“ MY DEAREST MELTON,—At any other moment than the present, I could find in my heart to lay my bit of oak across your shoulders ! Why—how is it, my dear, incorrigible boy, that you have not written ? When did William de la Bere ever turn from the sound of wo, or tarry in yielding succour to a friend in need ? Fie on you—for shame ! Melton, is it false pride which has chilled your words ? or have I, who have loved you as a son, been judged so falsely ? How I long to take you by the hand and speak my reproaches ! But this is not the moment ; I feel

I should only make a fool of myself while attempting to console ; and as to being angry, *you* know one trait of feeling in yourself can disarm me in an instant. .

“ But you should have written ; you should not have judged *me* as the idler of a club ; the mere man of fashion’s heartless court ; as one of the herd which gathers for a season, and separates as if they had never met. You have deprived me of the means of proving to your poor father that he still possessed one honest friend, one who would have sought him in misfortune, and have sought to conquer that delicacy which, when in his zenith, made me fearful lest my name or presence might awaken his heavier loss of former days. He knew, though long after his heart was widowed, how fondly, how passionately, I once —. But, forgive me the selfish recollection ; laugh at, reprove, if you will, one who, in years, might be your father, yet who still can think and feel with the freshness of early days. Had Sir John, your high-minded father, known the truth, how different had been our cast in life ! But, Melton, it is now too late to prove to

that honourable man the respect and love I bore him : there is but one sad office left by which I can demonstrate to the world that such regard survives his death. Side by side we will follow his mortal relics to the grave ; and then, my dear boy, did not I fear to wound your pride, I would say, let me supply the father you have lost. But more of this hereafter ; for, be assured, I shall punish your silence by seeing you the oftener, and visit on you the sins of my involuntary absence.

“ Yet forgive me, if I wrong you ; you may have written—it is possible that the letter miscarried ; and, if so, I can forgive you for not writing again. I can forgive you for ranking me with the herd, for there is a pride in poverty which I can rather honour than condemn ; the unfortunate should never sue a second time. Don’t be offended, my dear Melton, with the words I use : there is no dishonour in misfortune or poverty—Heaven forbid ! they are in themselves punishment enough, without that ; but, nevertheless, they are often the living grave through which we must pass to a better state. They purify, they

school, they teach us to know ourselves, and look beyond ourselves, to feel and think for others. Courage, my dear Melton! I have higher hopes of you now, than when we daily met at Brookes's, and, night after night, amidst the follies of the great. Courage! I repeat. Prove to the world that you can conquer adversity; fight your way, with honour and perseverance, through the trials by which you are surrounded, and then for the senate! It is my fancy—my hobby-horse—what you will; but it is there I wish to see you, and there no knowledge is useless. Be of good cheer; think you are sowing the seed of which I know you will reap the harvest.

“ Believe me your affectionate friend,

“ WILLIAM DE LA BERE.

“ P.S.—It is not to apologise for the length of this that I make it longer by a post-script. I have written what I could not have spoken; and if, in the warmth of *my* feelings, I have said ought to divert *yours*, I see no harm in this. I do not sympathise the less in your present affliction because I look to a remedy for the future. No, Melton; it is

because I wish to write a something more, and yet, almost dreading to write it, I have deferred it to the last. Oh, how often have I wished that man could live without money! Thousands, you say — that is, you once would have said — thousands wish the same. Very true. But, to be grave: so far from taking merit to myself for doing with my right hand what the left did not see, could it always be so, it would be to me the greatest luxury on earth. This, however, cannot be; and why should I shrink from touching upon this odious money — a theme which now has become your familiar? Why fear that you should take offence, or think that I intended to hurt the feelings of one who knows I would rather turn from my path than tread on the harmless worm? No, you will not do so: besides, I owe you much. Yes, Melton, I have been an evil prophet, and my words have come to pass. Have you forgotten — I never can — our conversation at Brookes's? It was the day when you startled me by speaking of your unhappy mother; when you betrayed a depth of feeling which, until then, had

escaped even my observation; and yet, in that same hour there mingled a foppish pride and vanity which provoked my anger, and led me to express a wish that misfortune might make you wise: *I told you the day would come!* My words, most probably, were unheeded by yourself; but, when we parted, they haunted my memory—I could not shake them off. I reproached myself for having uttered a wish so cruel, as if I felt the words had entailed the doom they invoked, and—*they have come to pass!* Yes, I have been your evil prophet; and now, my dear Melton, you must let me pay the penalty of my ill-timed augury. By this time, doubtless, you know my bankers, close to Temple Bar; to-morrow there will be five thousand pounds placed to your credit. Use it as your own; it is a fund which will supply itself: you will have no trouble but filling up a cheque in your own hand (they give no printed ones). Tutored as you have been, you will not feel ashamed to enter the dark and smoke-dried shop; and as to the dirty stained-glass door, there is always a porter in attendance to open

and shut it with the bow of a courtier. Do this, if you have forgiven the wicked prophet : if you still love him, never speak on a subject which would painfully remind him of his wickedness. May God's blessing be with you !

“ I must add a P.P.S., a *paulo postscript*, to tell you that I have but just returned from my wild mountains in Ireland — my triennial trip. The first person I saw, when about to enter Brookes's, was Mr. Brown, your late groom. Poor fellow ! while I live, or when I am dead, that man shall never want. ‘ How is this ? ’ I said ; pointing with my oak to strange horses and a new livery. I shall never forget the expression of the fellow's face, as, lifting up the arm I had touched, and looking at the gold-lace which surrounded the cuff, he shook his head, and answered, ‘ It's a sad thing, sir ; but the young squire is as stern and wilful as ever was Sir John. I begged to stay — I reminded my young master how I taught him to sit on a horse, when he wasn't higher than a spoke-brush. But it wouldn't do, sir ; he said I must leave him.

I told him, as plainly as I dared, that it wasn't for the value of wages, and that it was odd if I, who could turn out a racer with a coat like satin, could'n't dress a gentleman as well as a Frenchman. But it all wouldn't do, sir; he told me that I was never born to be a *varlet*, and that he had got me a capital place, and that go I must. So here I am, sir; but it's a bad business, and as for the scarlet and gold (once more looking on the cuff), it's gay enough to them as likes it; but, for my part, sir, I never look upon it without being more like to cry than laugh.' I longed to slip a guinea in the fellow's hand, but, 'like master, like man,' and I dared not. But I blessed his honest heart; and, having learned more through him than I had heard for months, I turned away from the club, went home, and took up my pen. Excuse this P.P.S.; it will prove I am the same rambling being that I ever was, put my hand on any thing that interests me, and delight in proving that you have still, at least, two honest friends in the world. Once more, God bless you!"

We need hardly say how this letter, partaking as it did of the warmth and wildness of William de la Bere, cheered the sad spirits of the sorrowing Mowbray. If the pure, unstudied overflowings of affection formed a strong contrast to the concise and polished notes of condolence which lay upon the table, it also was as distinct from the worthless mass as the thread of pure gold amidst the blackened mountain.

“Generous, noble being!” exclaimed Mowbray, as he read and re-read his letter, and experienced that happiness we feel when confirmed in the high opinion of those we love. “No, I never doubted him; I hope I did not, though I shrunk from writing a second time,” said Mowbray within himself, as he found how unshaken his faith ought to have been; and had it wavered, well might forgiveness be extended, as it had been. Who, of the thousands with whom he was intimate but yesterday, had sought him out? Who, of the hundreds who now begged to honour his father’s funeral; and who, in short, of the herd collected for a London season, knows or

cares for its fellow when the herd is scattered ? Like birds of migration, if they meet again, they know their species, as they gather for a season ; but they whose wings have drooped, whom chance or sickness may have forbidden to meet again, are forgotten and unlooked for.

Here, however, in the letter upon which Melton de Mowbray still gazed with delight, was ample proof that there was one amidst the high-bred herd who felt more interest in the fate of him whom misfortune had banished, than in those who had returned to their former haunts. Here were deeds as well as words ; and, though Mowbray was resolved never to touch one penny of the thousands so generously offered, he valued the offer as deeply as if he had intended to avail himself of it. Again, though resolved upon entering the army, the moment he could escape from his present difficulties, De la Bere's schemes for his joining the ranks of the senate, the opinion and hopes he fostered, were proofs of kindness to be hoarded in his heart, and on which his memory could banquet like a miser. The store was not likely to be diminished,

though his fixed determination was to toil for freedom ; and, when free, to be indebted to none on earth — to nothing but his own exertions. The wreck of his fortune was likely to furnish the means of purchasing a commission, and some small annuity, which would make him independent of all. Oh ! how fervently he panted for such a consummation ; for the hour when he might fly from the capital, from the country where still the fair being dwelt whom he might no longer call “ his own.”

On the day appointed for the funeral, Mr. De la Bere, the faithful Bowman, and Melton de Mowbray, assembled as mourners ; every thing had been ordered with the utmost simplicity ; but undertakers are men who, like others, soon become hardened to their calling. We have seen them beset a house, and watch, like hungry wolves for their feeder, — death ; like others, they regard their own interest more than the feelings of those who mourn : nay, more than that, they, in their way, like the pettifogging lawyers, prey upon misery — they impose and presume upon

the affliction of surviving relatives, and trust to the sadness of their hearts in quietly submitting to imposition.

That such is the case, was one amidst the many and varied lessons which now daily instructed the once gay leader of fashion. Mowbray had just arranged himself in the garb of wo, and was descending to the parlour to receive his noble-hearted friend, when the undertaker stepped on tip-toe from the chamber of death, and said, in the practised whisper of his trade,—

“ I beg your pardon, sir ; but we have ventured to prepare a hearse and coaches.”

“ How so ?” said Mowbray, startled by preparations in direct opposition to his orders : “ I told you we should walk.”

“ Indeed, sir, it was out of the question ; we could not think of it,” whispered the man in office.

“ It is but a step to the church,” observed Mowbray, obliging himself to give ear to details when his mind was full of the parting look which he had taken,—of the last hour which he had spent by the side of the leaden coffin

in which his father slept — careworn but calm — and scarcely changed since the hour in which he breathed his last.

“ True, sir ; but your father, Sir John de Mowbray’s rank, proper mark of respect — I’m sure, sir, you would not have been pleased. Only done for the best, sir, the world would say,—”

“ It matters not what — I cannot now contend the point,” said Mowbray, interrupting the question, and acquiescing, as the undertaker had foreseen that he would do.

He passed to the parlour. It was the first time he had ever joined in the office but too familiar to most ; and now, as principal, he was not likely to escape the first impression, which the most familiar must remember. The glare of day struggling through the closed, but unbarred shutters ; the chilly, cold appearance of the burning wax, as flesh transparent, but pale as death ; one table spread, as if it were the hour to feast and make merry, with the sparkling grape ; another with the scarfs, the cloaks, and trappings, dyed in black, and scented with its faint, peculiar smell ; the silent greetings

of invited guests ; the whispered converse of a few ; and, hark ! the heavy tread of mingled footsteps in the room above—again upon the stair—quicker—more and more confused the tread and scuffle ; and yet, without a word, as if a band of mutes were struggling for mastery or life : again they pass the hall—the struggle's over !—they march in order. The man of office enters, and, with a suppressed voice, announces that “ all is ready.”

It has been stated that Mr. De la Bere, the faithful Bowman, and the now Sir Melton de Mowbray, were to form the small, but sincere procession. The former, with his accustomed warmth and independence, spurned the undertaker's wish to teach the rules of proceeding, and immediately took his station by the side of the chief mourner.

“ This is the man's provoking folly,” whispered Mowbray in the ear of his noble friend, as, unable to repress his vexation, he pointed to a hearse with six horses—its plumes, trappings, and a host of attendants with batons.

“ Never mind, my dear Melton ; the fellow means well,—it is but proper,” answered

De la Bere, though surprised at preparations so different from what he had been led to expect, and which, simple as they were intended to be, he had highly approved of under existing circumstances.

“At such a moment, ’twas cruel—it distracts—’tis so opposed to the injunctions of my poor father.”

“Think not of it, my dear Melton; let every thought be sacred to him we follow to the grave,” said De la Bere, gently pressing the hand of that arm which rested on his.

“They shall be, if possible—they shall be,” answered Mowbray solemnly, as he grasped De la Bere’s hand, and looked a thousand thanks for the idea.

These few words, which had intruded on the solemnity congenial to such a moment, had passed between the friends as they lingered in the narrow entrance from the street, and while preparations were made to put the body in the hearse. As usual, a crowd had collected: Mowbray was still leaning on Mr. De la Bere’s arm, and unconsciously retained his hand while he watched, with mournful interest, the scene

before him. The pall was removed: for the first time he looked upon the outward coffin; and the bright blaze of red velvet, doubly striking by the contrast of the blackness of all else, seemed for an instant to be reflected on his pallid cheeks.

“La! look ye, Bess, that is beautiful! it can’t be cotton?” cried one amidst the crowd.

“Cotton!” echoed Bess; why, I tells you it’s a real silk *welwet*. Why, she who’d play’d the Queen t’other night at the play didn’t wear a better: ’tis my belief ’tis French.”

“I dare say it cost two guineas a yard,” said a third.

“My *heyas*, Bill!” uttered a youngster; “look at them nails and *andles*—they’re *hall* gold!”

“To be sure, Jim; doesn’t you know them bankers thinks no more of gold than you and I does of a *lollypop*? Why, you ninny, they makes gold for nothing!”

“If so,” said a man who had overheard the boys, “they had better pay their debts.”

“I think so too,” replied his neighbour; “better be honest to the living than honour

the dead : why, the coffin's as fine as a king's."

"Serves you right for a couple of fools, for signing the deed instead of a writ," said a third, with a laugh and look which fixed Sir Melton de Mowbray's attention, amidst the distraction which he endured in silence. He had seen and heard the same on Holborn Hill—on that never, never-to-be-forgotten day of arrest; it had not struck him then, but now he recognised the features he had seen in Sir Launcelot Capulet's chambers : it was his ruthless creditor, Savage.

These remarks, mixed with others equally galling, long as they may appear on paper, occupied no more space of time than what was required to place the splendid coffin within the hearse. The doors were closed; it moved on, and Mowbray gladly escaped from observation within the mourning coach which followed.

He had kept his word—at least, by no expression, no outward token, had he betrayed how cruelly the thoughts which were due to the dead had been invaded. If there be such a thing as "the luxury of wo," it is to be al-

lowed to pour forth our sorrows in the presence of Him alone whose omniscience reads our very thoughts, or at most, with those whose sympathies are linked with ours. Mr. De la Bere, who, of course, had heard and seen all that had passed, found some difficulty in exercising the forbearance which he had recommended. He was no sooner seated in the coach, and saw the door closed, than he pulled up the glasses as a more effectual screen against the public gaze. A something like an angry execration was suppressed, and the next moment kinder words of consolation were framed within his heart : these, too, in their turn, were unuttered. He looked upon Mowbray, who had shrunk to the corner ; his face was hidden beneath the folds of the cloak which his hand had raised, and he left the mourner to the dark current of those thoughts which he might disturb, but could not brighten. The sun which shines when the cheek is wet, may dry the tear, but wounds in the act of healing.

They proceeded in silence—in silence they listened to our impressive service for the dead—in silence they returned to the house they had

left — the windows were opened — the candles extinguished : there was, as far as locality would permit, the every-day cheerfulness of life ; but it was not the moment to share its influence—the change was too sudden. Mr. De la Bere uttered his usual “ God bless you, my dear boy,” wrung his hand, and suffered him to retire to his chamber.

On the evening of the following day, Sir Melton de Mowbray received a packet, which ran as follows :—

“ Enclosed are the bill and receipt of the man you employed. I have spared you the painful necessity of reproving the fellow’s imposition, or hearing his defence. *I* could say what *you* could not. You must forgive my interference. God bless you ever.

“ Yours affectionately,

“ WILLIAM DE LA BERE.”

“ Noble, generous creature ! a child might read the kindness of thy motives !” exclaimed Mowbray : and though he adhered to his determination of accepting no pecuniary aid, he

was in that hour of destitution so touched by this thoughtful act, that he kissed the note with fervour as pure, though somewhat less passionate, as if the words had been penned by Lady Helen's hand. Let the stoic sneer; we blush not to record the fact—the folly—weakness—or whatever the world may choose to term it.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LETTER.

“ Thoughts cannot form themselves in words so horrid,
As can express my guilt.”

DRYDEN.

SOME two months had elapsed, from the day which consigned Sir John de Mowbray to the quiet of the grave, when Sir Melton de Mowbray was seated, as usual, in his private office, awaiting the arrival of the daily post. With its usual punctuality, the post arrived; and, as usual, Bowman entered with a large packet of letters.

“ Take a seat, Bowman,” said Mowbray, pointing to a chair by his side; “ let us see what to-day will bring forth.”

“ Halt there, sir !” cried Bowman, in professional alarm, as he saw the young banker about to tear open a closely written letter.

“ What now ! what’s the matter ?”

“ I beg pardon, sir, but you always forget the scissors ; there is no knowing what mischief you may do. Here they are, sir,” said Bowman, presenting a pair which, in a lady’s eye, if not in a tailor’s, were worthy of the more dignified term of shears.

“ Keep them—keep them, Bowman ; forgive my impatience, and remember I am still young in my apprenticeship.”

“ True, sir : better let me open them as usual, I’m better drilled in the service.”

“ Quite right,” said Mowbray ; and added, with a smile, which partook something of former days, “ had I been born a man-milliner, or like you, Bowman, been blest with military ardour, I might have been more at home in handling the naked steel.”

“ Ah, sir !” replied Bowman with a sigh, yet speaking with something of the tone which a smile from his young recruit had called forth, “ those days are gone by. I’m too much like the brave Highlanders of old, who, when the paymaster failed, left the profession of war and returned to the duties of home. I have opened no book but a ledger since poor Sir

John resigned the command, and have thought of no weapon, excepting my penknife and scissors. No, sir, by day and night my thoughts are devoted here,"—pointing to the letters and their contents.

"I know it, I know it, my kind friend," said Mowbray warmly, yet sadly, as he felt that in jesting with cold steel he had made his wounds bleed afresh.

"Capital!" exclaimed Bowman, as he glanced at a signature in his hand, and a parcel of country notes payable in London. "That man's remittance is as good as a victory; I thought he meant to steal a march upon us. Good again!"—glancing at the next; "Bill on Hoares'—Hankey—Coutts—Field—marshals all, sir—strong as Gibraltar. What's this?—an order on Childs!—man of war, sir!"

"But what's this?" cried Mowbray, with unfeigned astonishment, as he suddenly interrupted Mr. Bowman's commentaries; which, like Cæsar's, were generally terse and warlike, as he fought the good fight after his own fashion.

“ That, sir! it must be a mistake, or else it is intended for yourself,” rejoined Bowman, as he looked at a letter sealed with black wax, fringed with a black border, and folded in a form widely different from the others.

“ There can be no mistake—you need not be afraid to take it,” said Mowbray, as he extended his hand, and held out a letter addressed to “ Thomas Bowman, Esq., at Messrs. D’Aubigny, De Mowbray, and Co’s., Lombard Street, London,” with “ Private ” in the corner.

“ It cannot be, sir; why, it’s a woman’s hand-writing!” exclaimed Bowman, who still refused to touch the letter, and stared at it as if a letter from one of womankind were the most appalling and wonderful event in the world. “ I tell you, sir, it cannot be on business; for who would think of adding ‘ Lombard Street?’ as if Messrs. D’Aubigny and Co’s. banking house, London, were not enough. It must be for you, sir; for I am sure it’s a woman’s.”

“ Well, Bowman, is there no lady in the land whom you know—none that you value?”

“ Not a soul, sir, but my dear old mother.”

“ Men, as well as women, are prone to leave both father and mother, and form a nearer tie ; and you—”

“ That will never be my case,” said Bowman, as, with more than usual vivacity, he interrupted Mowbray. “ No, sir, never,” he continued in a calmer, but earnest tone. “ For *my* sake—to insure *me* the comforts of an undivided home—my widowed mother, ere youth and beauty were on the wane, refused an offer from which few of womankind would have turned. This she did for my sake : shall I do less for hers ? No, sir ; there is but one way to balance our accounts, and repay the debt I owe :—while she forms an unit amidst the millions on earth, there shall neither be addition nor division in our happy and united home.”

While Mowbray admired the single-hearted devotion of this grateful son, he could not but smile at his deserting the field of Mars for illustrations, and, with a truth to nature, using the language of his daily habits. “ I understand you,” he said, ere the smile had departed, “ thanks to your kind lessons in arithmetic ;

and it were well for the world if all debtors were guided by such high and honourable feelings. But, may you not have lost some relative?"

"Have not one in existence, except my venerable parent."

"Some friend?"

"Don't know; don't care for a soul, excepting my old mother and yourself, sir — if you'll forgive the liberty."

"Forgive! would that others were as worthy of the name of friend. But, take your letter, there can be no mistake; we shall never get through our task."

This suggestion had the desired effect. Bowman took the letter in one hand, and with the other applied the disproportioned scissors. Having made one cut, he then laid it down again; and, declaring that business should be first attended to, he quietly proceeded with the despatches for the house.

"Now, Bowman, for your love-letter," said Sir Melton in jest, yet feeling a curiosity which he could not account for; "or shall I leave

you the office to yourself?" he added, as he suppressed this feeling, and recalled the word "private" in the corner.

"Halt, sir! halt, sir! I have not a secret in the world which I wish to conceal from you; and, after all, it may concern you more than myself. It is no common hand; there is a boldness and freedom which marks the character: though the writing be a woman's, it may be on business." And with these remarks Bowman proceeded to open the epistle, which, to his unpractised eyes, appeared in form as wonderful as little Gulliver in the land of Brobdignag.

Strong in the impression that there could be nothing "private" between himself and the pupil whose interests he had made his own, Bowman intended to read the letter aloud; but, as his eye outstripped his words with the quickness of a practised reader, his voice fell, and in a tone almost subdued to a whisper, he read with starts, intervals, and comments, as follows:—

"Believe me, I am not mad ('we doubt that,' muttered Bowman, and he turned to look

at the post mark, but could make nothing of it). No, no; that blessed respite from existence—that dream of living death has passed away, and now I feel so conscious of life—of what I am—of all that has been—thought is so vivid—feeling so powerful—that it seems as if day and night were one—as if I should dream and sleep no more (‘mad! must be mad, sir!—can never be for me,’ he muttered, yet once more confessed an interest by continuing). I have heard—yet long dark years have fled since such brighter truths were taught—yes, I once was told that the guilty, proud and haughty though they be, tremble in the presence of the innocent and good. I feel it now; yes, in thus addressing you—in thus approaching to implore your aid—in appealing to you as a good and virtuous son, and oh! above all, as one blessed with a pure and virtuous mother—my hand trembles as if I were about to invade some forbidden sanctuary, to approach a home unworthy of myself——”

“What can it mean, sir?” uttered Bowman, partly in astonishment, and partly to conceal how deeply he felt this tribute to his

revered parent; but the question was asked without raising his eyes from the paper he held in both hands.

“ Pray, pray proceed,” answered Mowbray, who, with mingled anguish and emotion, had listened to the wild, yet touching words. “ And yet,” he added, as again the word ‘ private ’ caught his eye, “ it was probably intended for yourself alone.”

“ Impossible, sir ! quite impossible ! I know no one ; it is some poor demented creature : she only thinks she knows me. But let us see.”

“ —Yes, my fingers tremble : that hand, which once was raised against my life with the firmness, but, alas ! without the virtue of the Roman matron, now is scarcely equal to the guidance of the pen I hold (‘ poor thing ! what an awful thing is the madness of woman ! Eh ! what is this ? ’ exclaimed Bowman, in concluding his expression of sympathetic remark, and glancing onward). And yet, a something tells me you will not spurn my fervent prayers : no, you will grant my petition, and write from time to time. For years I have

known you, directly and indirectly ; for years I have thirsted for this channel of intelligence, but dared not ask it. Now, when the father is dead—the orphan alone, ruined, and deserted—by the love which you bear your own dear mother, write to the wretched mother whom sin has rendered childless—to her who has, by one fatal act, severed the source from the living stream—to one whose son survives, yet never—never—”

“ The name ! the name ! ” cried Mowbray, no longer master of the emotions he had struggled to repress ; and, without possessing himself of the letter, he interrupted Bowman’s methodical precision, by turning the page and looking to the signature. Amidst or apart from other syllables, he read those words of thrilling interest—“ *once, Julia Saladin.* ”

“ My mother ! thou poor unhappy outcast of the world ! and does thy son still mingle with the yearnings of thy heart ? ” exclaimed Mowbray ; and, unable to restrain the burst of feeling which had gathered within his own heart, he paced the room and sobbed convulsively.

“ My dear, my honoured sir ! be calm, or I shall never forgive myself ! ” said Bowman, as soon as he could command himself ; and then added, as he still pleaded for forgiveness, “ it is all my fault, sir, but I hope you’ll forgive me. It is, indeed, from your unhappy mother : but in the end she enjoins my silence, tells me to spare—”

“ Enough—too much—not another word ! If I have learnt that which she intended to be sacred, I have atoned for my heedless transgressions. Think no more of the weakness you have witnessed, or, as a son, honour and respect it in silence. Bowman, my kind friend, oh ! how I thank you for the tear you’ve shed. If you had ever heard the noble De la Bere describe the brightness of promise which dawned with the name of Julia Saladin, you would not wonder if I think, and think till my blood is curdled—till—but it matters not—oh ! that accursed traitor ! But, for my sake, Bowman, you will write kindly, gently as yourself : confess how much I know, and how I knew it—how deeply I felt : tell her she is still remembered—has never been

forgotten since she wept and left—no, no, say not that; say nothing that would wring her heart too keenly.”

Mowbray could give no further instructions. The recollection of the parting scene, which in our earlier pages was confessed to Mr. De la Bere, unmanned him for the moment. He left the faithful clerk to proceed with the details of the busy day, while he retired to the privacy of his dwelling. It is only the wealthy and independent who have the privilege of indulging tears, and they but rarely need it; the poor, the unfortunate, they who, by the head or hand, must earn subsistence, have little time for sorrow. Within an hour, Mowbray was passing from office to office, directing, overlooking the affairs of the day; now busied with a host of letters, now replying to the clamours of inquiry, now discussing the merits of a bill, the wisdom of discounting, or the chances of a protest;—all, in short embraced within the mysteries of banking, as if such thoughts alone engrossed his mind, and there was neither time nor space for the grief which “lay heavy at his heart.”

CHAPTER V.

THE CITY ROOKS ; SAINT DUNSTAN IN THE EAST ;
AND GREENWICH PARK.

“ Thames, the most loved of all the Ocean’s sons
By his old sire, to his embraces runs,
Hasting to pay his tribute to the sea,
Like mortal life, to meet eternity.
Tho’ with those streams he no resemblance hold
Whose foam is amber, and their gravel gold,
His genuine and less guilty wealth t’ explore,
Search not his bottom, but survey his shore.
O could I flow like thee, and make thy stream
My great example, as it is my theme !
Tho’ deep, yet clear ; though gentle, yet not dull ;
Strong, without rage ; without o’erflowing, full.”

DENHAM.

WE are now about to make a serious request, and beg our readers to advance twelve entire months.

“ I shall do no such thing,” cries the spruce Mr. Evergreen, a gay bachelor on the wrong side of fifty.

“Quite of your opinion, my dear sir; time is much too precious,” said Miss Snowdrop; a lady, whose age not being printed in the catalogue of noble blood, had long since been a fixture.

“With all my heart!” exclaimed Harry Hopeful, an eldest son, and just twenty.

“And mine too, dear Harry,” added his pretty sister, by way of rejoinder, and thinking of the “one other year, and then I shall be out.”

And if—such possibilities are fast approaching—our young readers extended to the boy in petticoats, would he not gladly skip the year which intervened between the glories of a masculine attire? And if the oldest upon earth would be as candid as the young, is there one so satisfied with the present that he does not look with hope and desire to the following year? No, not one, while yet there beams a ray of hope; and, if we except the madness of despair which urges the maniac “to rush, unsummoned, to the presence of his God,” there is not one who does not look beyond those passing moments which man can neither stay

nor hasten. "Another year, and my castle will be complete — a few more years, and these shrubs will hide yon wall," say the rich : "another year, my boy will earn his bread," say the poor : "another year, and Heaven may call me hence," say the aged, the wretched, and infirm, who have learnt that rest is happiness, and who, if resigned, still look with hope to their Saviour's promise of eternal peace.

And who is there that will gainsay us ; nay, who that will not thank us, for passing the tedium of twelve or twice twelve months of our hero's daily toils ? If his fate has won upon their interest, they must have hoped for brighter days, or wished, in mercy to his trials, that some decided crisis would terminate their reign. Events are hurrying to a close ; and with the exception of a few scenes, founded in the romance of truth, which interrupted the dull monotony of duty, we shall shortly arrive at the dark hour which fixed his destiny on earth.

The galaxy of London fashion, broken and dispersed, had astonished with their brilliancy the quiet natives of the country, and burst like

comets upon their humble orbits. Again they had met in the centre of fashion ; and again the kind, though eccentric Mr. De la Bere, was one amongst—though scarcely of—them. He arrived late at night. The next morning he was in Lombard Street, by the hour of breakfast.

“ How are you, how are you, my dear Melton ? ” cried the country squire, as, with the familiarity of an old and welcome guest, he pushed aside the hall-door which Martha had left ajar, and, looking up at the landing-place, caught sight of Sir Melton de Mowbray in his *robe de chambre*.

“ What ! De la Bere ! and at this hour, too ! ” exclaimed Mowbray, between surprise and delight. The next moment he had cleared the stairs like a boy let loose upon his playground, and returned the warm grasp of his true and kind friend.

“ You pale-faced, idle sluggard ! what, only just out of bed ?—why, look at me ! ” said De la Bere. And as he thus called attention to himself, he drew up his commanding figure, slightly lifted his piece of faithful oak with one hand, and then, to old Martha’s horror, in-

dented the polished floor by bringing the ferule firmly to the ground, while the fingers and thumb of the other hand were slowly passed down the cheeks till they met at the point of the chin.

“ Thank Heaven, my dear friend, that you still are blessed with health,” said De Mowbray, as he gazed with admiration on the open manly countenance of his friend, and contrasted his noble bearing with that of the beings amongst whom he lived. “ Why, the country air and the breath of morn, though London’s, have made *you* younger since we met; and *me*, perhaps—but, what of that? a thousand, thousand thanks, for this early recollection of the poor sluggard.”

There was something of the tone of melancholy mingled with this grateful acknowledgment; De la Bere read it in an instant.

“ Psha! nonsense, dear Melton, forgive the word sluggard; you merit the term less, much less than myself: *you* are usefully employed, *I*, at best, but idly busy; and as to my early visit,

pure selfishness, nothing more ;—you know we bachelors hate bad tea, and—”

“ I remember, I remember ; and you hate a decoction instead of an infusion,” said Mowbray with a laugh, as he finished the sentence, and recalled a learned lecture on *les modes des Chinois*.

“ Quite right ; that’s the only plan ; and more too than most ministers know, though they live in hot water themselves, and call on John Bull to join in the outcry for war.”

“ It is a pity the water don’t boil, for then—”

“ Very true, it always should,” said the bachelor quickly, and thinking more of his tea than the nation’s pilot.

“ Indeed !” exclaimed Mowbray ; “ so you’d punish the rage for red-coats by boiling the ministers like so many lobsters ?”

“ No, no, not quite so cruel as that : while Fox can roast, and Sheridan baste, they need no other dressing. But, d—— it, Martha, that urn is of no use—water never boiled in an urn !” exclaimed De la Bere, as his thoughts

were diverted from the state by the entrance of her who was to minister to their wants.

Martha, whose face had been hidden by a volume of steam, placed the urn on the table, and then resented the injury by saying—

“ Not *bile*, sir! my urns always *bile* in the city; and so they did in the square, when poor dear master, Sir John, allowed me to use it. Look there, sir!” And, anxious to convince the incredulous bachelor, Martha had recourse to her apron, and lifted the cover.

De la Bere, as anxious to prove he was right, had bent forward his head, and was glad to retreat from the scalding steam which rushed with one elastic bound, and shrouded the sceptic. “ Seeing is believing, feeling is conviction,” he said, as he wiped his face, and incautiously touched the small lid of the red-hot heater, which the libelled minister had also removed. “ It is like looking down the crater of Vesuvius: shut it up, Mistress Martha, lest we have an eruption, and all be destroyed like *Torre del Greco*.”

Martha looked up in innocent wonderment, while she mechanically obeyed; and when the

cover was replaced, she ventured to say,—“ I have heard talk of that, sir, t’other day : what a dreadful eruption ! for my part, I think it must be worse than the smallpox. *Toddy* what, sir, do they call it ? ”

De la Bere repeated the name with a good-humoured laugh ; and having told Martha he wished she could teach butlers the art of boiling urns, he called for the caddy, and set to work.

The tea was made to perfection, and the bachelor’s walk had created an appetite which gave a zest to the morning repast. In the midst, however, of this selfish satisfaction, he found time for inquiry and comment : the latter increasing as the feast decreased, the former began by his saying—“ And now, Melton, tell me all about yourself ; how do you get on ? ”

“ As well as can be expected, as they say of ladies during their confinement. I keep to my vow of living within the city.”

“ Sha’n’t allow it any longer ; you must come and dine with me.”

Mowbray shook his head.

“ Then I will dine with you.”

“Welcome, most welcome, I say to that; and a thousand thanks for your company.”

“Bachelor’s fare, as it used to be: mutton chops—each man his plate—each plate its cover—one at a time—hot and hot, with some of old D’Aubigny’s old port.”

“As you will.”

“Ay, ay, leave me and Martha to order dinner. That point settled, now tell me, have you had many visits—seen many friends?”

Once more Mowbray shook his head, and, after a pause, said—“A very few.”

“Never mind, never mind, so much the better: the friendship which changes like theameleon is not worth preserving. He who meets you with a smile in the light of the court, and looks black upon you in the smoke of the city, is a man unworthy of your thoughts. Weed him—cast him aside—fling him from you, as only worthy of the dunghill of corruption; there is nothing healthy in his heart.”

“I fear,” said Mowbray, as he smiled at the warmth of his friend, “that the heap would rival those which were raised when the plague was in London, if you include all the dowagers

who smile and shake hands in the country, and cut dead in the capital."

"Women are—but women," replied the bachelor after a pause, as if doubtful how to finish the sentence. "With few exceptions, *they* must have amusement, if it be nothing better than a country cousin, or the curate's homely wife; but a wise man never forms an acquaintance to-day which he would blush to acknowledge to-morrow: in the presence of the prince or peasant, his friend, *worthy of the name*, is still the friend."

"I fear, then, we should have but few, and win the character of proud reserve," remarked Mowbray, who knew how popular with the many was Mr. De la Bere.

"Better that, than deceive or be deceived: the few, the chosen few, will outweigh the rejected many. Better be deemed proud, than descend to familiarity with those you despise, or affect a friendship you cannot feel. We should neither forget the dignity due to ourselves, nor others: the richest may be honoured with the friendship of the poorest, and if worthy, will neither shrink from the tie, nor

lose grade by the confession. There is a rank of intellect above hereditary title, which the true gentleman is always ready to acknowledge."

"All that may be very true; but how is it you contrive to be popular with all, or most ——"

"Thank you for the saving clause, which spares my blushes for unqualified flattery."

"Nay, nay, my kind friend, you know me better: tell me, I pray you, how is it?"

"Because I never pretend more than I feel, nor yield companionship in one place which I deny in another. To be affable and intimate are as wide apart as pole from pole; good breeding demands the former for the civility of an honest cobbler, as much as for the salutation of a king. With neither need we be intimate; it is only the man of little mind, whose intellect, powerless within itself and wanting in self-respect, changes like the chameleon, and wears the colours of the circle in which he stands; the man who cringes to the great, when the great are by, is sure to be 'hail, fellow! well met!' with his valet or

the low, when others are not near. To be honest and equal, will, in the long run, win respect from most, and from the few who love you, that ——”

“Devotion and gratitude which can neither change nor perish!” said Mowbray, filling up the sentence, and grasping Mr. De la Bere by the hand, while his eyes glistened with affection. “But now we must part for awhile, unless, for variety,” he added, with a smile, “you fancy the folios of pounds, shillings, and pence.”

“Not I—not I—oh, that horrible money! no—no! I have a world of business between this and dinner-time!”

“May I ask what it is?”

“First, to visit your neighbours, my poor old friends, the rooks—a blessing on their cawing and fidelity!”

“A rookery, my neighbours?”

“Ay, Melton; in the dead of night within hearing of their notes; that is, if they talked in their sleep. What! not know St. Dunstan’s Hill, its trees and rookery?”

Mowbray shook his head.

“ Nor the saint’s magic spire, which shoots to the sky like the horn of the unicorn ? ”

Another shake.

“ Nor how it stands on arches, light as the camelopard’s fore-legs ? ”

“ It must be all on one side, the creature’s *four* legs are unequal,” said Mowbray, with a malicious pleasure, in turning the attack on his want of observation.

“ Psha ! you know what I mean,” replied Mr. De la Bere, who was too much attached to his spire and rooks to admit of a joke. “ So, you really know nothing of the matter ? ”

“ Alas ! I must plead total ignorance ; and little did I dream that you would, like honest Bowman, give me lessons in the city.”

“ Put on your hat, Melton ; so far you shall go on my day’s pilgrimage. One word to friend Martha, and I am your guide to St. Dunstan’s. To any but yourself,” said Mr. De la Bere, as they journeyed arm in arm towards that wild and fairy effort in architecture, “ I dare not confess the interest I feel in those poor rooks : when I think how

my beloved sisters cling with affection to the venerable Southam, how we all worship the seat of our ancestors, the spot where we were born, it pains me to think of what must be the fate of yonder birds. There they linger, still venerating as we do the blessed word of—home; attached to the trees whereon for ages and ages their nests have been built, their young ones reared.”

“ But how can they feed them ? ”

“ Ay, there’s the rub ! Year after year the meadows, the fields, the gardens, are fading into distance ; the capital is shooting forth its monstrous roots, and with its growth the country is ossified around ; where will the poor things find the grub, the worm, the caterpillar, to feed their young, or twigs to build their cradle ? Look ! look at yonder fellow, with a something in its beak ! what a weary flight it must have had : now watch the nest ! ”

“ I see—I see ! ” cried Mowbray, forgetting like the rooks the hum of busy man by which he was surrounded, and intent upon the clamorous cries of hunger which came from three

or four distended mouths, brought to the edge of the nest by the aid of wings too young for flight. "Poor little things!" he said, half aloud, as he still watched the black population struggling, like himself, for existence.

"Well, my dear Melton," said Mr. De la Bere, interrupting his meditations, "you see, if people will but walk with their eyes and ears open, no created spot is void of interest. Another day, admire the work of man; that spire, which stands like the antelope, if you will object to my *fore* legs of the camelopard. Now, you to your business, I to mine."

"May I ask where you are going?"

"To track the Thames, that main and muddy artery of the dark leviathan; and would that you could join me, to feel, as I shall, the swelling pride of being one amidst the millions of the free, whose masts float like a forest on the wave. And then for Greenwich, its palace, and its park! the dreams of the virgin queen, her court and flowers of chivalry; and, dearer still — don't laugh, Mowbray —"

“ Not I, on my honour.”

“ Well, then, dearer still — the dear old stumping pensioners, those hearts of English oak, with half their timbers lopped.”

“ Do you know any of the pensioners ?”

“ Ay, that I do, and the only men upon the pension-list that I honour; they are the chivalry of ocean, though children upon earth — original, guileless, and apart. How I love to listen to their yarns; how nobly has that noble palace been bestowed! I tell you, Melton, I would rather see our only palace which deserves the name garnished with the honest faces of these shipwrecked figures, than Versailles in all the glories of Louis Quatorze. But, good bye until dinner; your citizens will think me mad!” And, with a smile at the fervency of his tribute to the maimed and wounded, he started from the Tower Stairs, and slipped a shilling into the hand of “ poor Jack,” who begged for a copper.

“ Thank your honour! the Lord bless your honour! long life and good luck to ——”

“Get out of my way, you noisy rascal!” cried Mr. De la Bere, interrupting Jack’s exuberant thanks, and stepping into the boat without his assistance.

The tide served. Within a little, the warm-hearted bachelor was threading the mazes of the London pool, or darting along the high roads of the floating forest; ere long, he touched the palace-stairs, and quickly welcomed many a well-known face, or hailed the echoes of some stumping legs, whose wooden footsteps said, “Behold the conquering hero comes!” Some, alas! were missed; their yarn was spun; their earthly voyage was over; their canvass was spread for brighter worlds; and if one honest, deep-felt sigh, could aid to fill the sails, then, thanks to William de la Bere, they anchored in heaven the sooner for his tribute.

Again he stood within the park where queens were *fêted*, and kings have hunted; he sought its solitudes to muse upon the lowly, good, and gallant, who, saved from the roaring cannon and perils of the deep, had sunk to rest in the peaceful harbour of a royal

palace; he looked from the heights, and saw the huge leviathan breathing its breath of smoke, and gloried in the annals of its unsightly grandeur; and now again, he sought the shadow of the Spanish chestnut, and, blest in the smiles of some dozen children, his magazine of pockets supplied the welcome bread to feed the timid deer.

“Pray reach me that bough,” cried one boy.

“And me those leaves,” said another, who looked up to Mr. De la Bere’s height as if he could have gathered a bunch of stars.

“And do, pray, find a piece more bread for me,” asked a lovely little girl, who, grateful as a fawn, yet more timid than the deer, wished, yet trembled, to supply a noble stag.

There, and thus innocently happy in the happiness of children, we leave the artless man to exhaust his pockets, and, when the feast was over, to tell the legends of the park, or mingle instruction with amusement, as he turned to the Observatory and explained the uses of the telescopes, the wonders of heaven above, and man’s invention of the camera-

obscura with which the learned Dr. Maskelyne was wont to amuse his guests when Easter came, and cockney myriads made merry on the sloping green.

CHAPTER VI.

A PEEP AT THE MANŒUVRER.

“ There sat the sorceress, and conned by day
The labours of the night. The full moon rose.
And midnight sounded like a merry peal :
And she, the beldam, called her spirits round,
And wandered forth. She stole the glow-worm’s lamp
Of living emerald, and diamonds plucked
From fire-flies dancing by the green hedge-rows.
She robbed the morning of its pearly dew,
And skimmed the moonbeams from the silver stream,
As charms resistless to a maiden’s eye,
To dazzle and deceive. This done, she stooped
To wind the spider’s thread, wherewith to mesh
The blind within her net.”

A. BIRD.

WHILE William, the last of the Norman De la Bere’s, is thus peacefully engaged ; while Sir Melton de Mowbray is wielding the banker’s pen, and honest Martha directing the movements of the kitchen, it may be

well to recall Lady Blankisle to the reader's recollection. She, though out of sight, has been no idle manœuvrer since the memorable defeat of her once intended son-in-law.

It may be doubted, whether the equal tenour of Lady Helen Fawndove's suffering were not, in the main, greater than that of Sir Melton de Mowbray. Few — none, but a being of the weakest intellect, would hesitate in preferring death by drowning, to death by drops of water falling on the skull with the light and quick succession of a second-hand. The necessity of distraction in man's more active sphere, compensates, in some degree, for the ruder trials to which he is exposed. If to man belongs that sterner courage which enables him to bear the stab which pierces to the heart, to woman belongs the courage of endurance under slow and ceaseless torture.

Lady Helen could seek no change of scene, she was still the daughter, and, of course, was subject to her parent's will; her hours, her habits, her pursuits, were all unchanged; and yet, alas! how changed was all — the all within herself.

He, whose voice and looks had thrown their magic charm on all things, was banished from her side; the flowers had lost their fragrance, music its melody, nature her beauty; they spoke of him who was not near; there was poison in their breath, and discord in their voice. Where could her vision fall, her footsteps turn, that there was not a something — a little something — to remind her of him whose touch, whose word or thoughts, had stamped his image on a thousand trifles? Nowhere, alas! and, like the drops which wear the senseless stone, or torture the living brain, they fell upon her memory, and wore her suffering mind.

But, unless, indeed, our humble efforts have miscarried, the gentle Lady Helen is known as one of those who blend firmness and decision with the love of peace. Little does the world imagine the efforts and endurance to which such can rise when strong occasions call. Were it possible to divest the sword of those associations which attend that weapon; if the thoughts of war and violence could be banished from the mind; then we

would venture to liken such beings to the Damascus blade, while sleeping in its velvet sheath and hidden by the pearls and jewellery which cloak the power within. It will bend, like a plaything to the wishes of a child ; and yield, as if a part of its soft and beautiful exterior. It is an ornament in the drawing-room, where crowds admire the outward charms, gaze upon the pure and pliant gold, and never, or rarely, reflect upon a sterner metal beneath a form so fair.

From Lady Blankisle no sympathy was to be expected. To Lady Helen's dearest friend the theme of love was too sacred to be breathed : her hopes — if still there lingered one ; her despair — if such were her conviction ; whatever were her sufferings or feelings, they were all to herself alone. But she bore them with constancy and meekness : she sought employment, she redoubled her efforts in those pursuits which fix our thoughts and enlarge the intellect ; from these again she turned to lighter studies, which, like the chaplet of Minerva, added grace as well as honour to Genius in repose. Thus it was she struggled

to restore the elasticity of mind, and seem to the world what she had ever been ; neither did she strive in vain. But, ah ! how little did the world imagine, that she who wished “ good night,” with a smile so calm and sweet, that they who heard it felt, while yet awake, that serenity which her gentle wishes had invoked — little did they imagine, that she knew not the repose she wished to others ; that, in the midnight hour, scalding, agonising tears, mingled with the prayers she offered to Him whose ears are ever open to the wretched, and whose mercy strengthens the weak who pray for the power of treading in the path of duty.

The Marquess of Blankisle’s mansion, in St. James’s Square, could command but a brief memento of nature’s charms, which abounded at his country seat. In those days, there was not even a dirty green leaf to relieve the eye as it entered the patrician square ; nothing was seen but the horse and his rider, which floated miraculously in a round basin of water, a belt of iron railing, and a wide extent of muddy pavement. But a something, nay much, had

been done to render the *studio* of Lady Helen Fawndove agreeable to her taste : at the back of the house there still was space for the sun to shine, and the lungs to breathe ; and the French windows opened upon a balcony, covered with ground and coloured glass.

Here it was that both father and mother united their gifts of such flowers as could exist in the mellowed light and bloom in the artificial warmth of the coloured rays. We have said “ both,” for it must be remembered that Lady Blankisle really loved her daughter, and in all, but her ill-judged zeal to make her wretched by what she deemed a good match, she was an affectionate mother. Here then it was that Lady Helen was permitted to pass her mornings, and sit by the plants she loved so much ; and which, perhaps, like the sickly offspring to a doting parent, were the dearer for the cares they needed.

“ Are you busy, dear Helen ?” said Lady Blankisle, as she stood at the door which led to the retreat we have lightly sketched.

“ No, mamma, not very : pray come in,”

replied Lady Helen, as she laid down her pencil; and, while a slight blush yet hovered on her cheeks, she rose to kiss the intruder who had caused it.

There had been no little-minded attempts to conceal the work on which she was engaged, though well-known footsteps had been heard, and though the quickened pulse confessed a fear that a print from the picture of Sir Joshua Reynolds (already described) might not be quite an agreeable object to Lady Blankisle's sight. The fear was not unfounded; Lady Blankisle's eye glanced at the print, thence to an admirable copy *coloured from memory*, and at that moment she wished that the engraver's hand had withered, rather than have multiplied the work: but, neither by word nor look was the wish betrayed. Passing at once to the little conservatory, she inquired how this or that was thriving, praised the beauty of a budding rose, and sweetness of the simple mignonette; while, with the heart of an accomplished manœuvrer, she pondered how to turn the hated picture to account.

“ May I rob you, dear Helen ? ” she said, as she ended her admiration by stooping to gather a sprig of the exquisite weed.

“ Any thing — all, mamma. Do let me make you a bouquet for to-night ; you see I’m rich in blossoms.”

“ Thank you, thank you, not another thing — you need them more than I. How I wish that you could transplant these lovely roses to your cheeks ; but — ” and Lady Blankisle gently patted the pallid cheeks as she added — “ you are a naughty, self-willed child.”

“ Nay ; but, mamma, you would not have me wear the milk-maid’s rosy hues — ’tis so plebeian.”

“ Not quite, my love ; but extremes are bad, and I would not that, at your age, you should touch the rouge we matrons wear. No, no ; you must not paint to make the lilies blush. But, indeed, I fear you read or draw too much : let me see your present task.”

“ ’Tis scarcely worth your notice,” said Lady Helen faintly, as she accompanied her mother to the seat she had occupied but now.

“ True genius is always modest — if a mother may quote the adage to her child. Indeed you have succeeded admirably : I see you have left the poor engraver to his lines, and imaged the fine colouring of Sir Joshua.”

At this remark, Lady Blankisle's wishes were fulfilled : the roses gathered quickly upon Lady Helen's cheeks ; but, alas ! their reign was brief as resistless — they passed like the glow of an alpine sunset, which passing, blanches the very snow with a chill and deathly pallor. Reply there was none.

“ It is certainly a splendid picture — poetically, beautifully imagined,” said Lady Blankisle after a silent pause, and without appearing to notice the roses which had been “ transplanted,” or the throbbing bosom whose pulse was audible. Again there was no reply.

“ Yes,” she continued, “ it is admirably conceived, and that resemblance perfect :” pointing to the figure of the gipsy, in which disguise Sir Joshua had embodied the wild beauty of person and intellect which were once so strongly characteristic of Lady de Mowbray.

“What a pity that a being so gifted, so noble, should have fallen, and left a stain upon her offspring!”

This last word, though doubtful in its number, was, as Lady Helen knew and felt, intended for *one*, the only one, who claimed the right of calling Lady de Mowbray mother.

“Yes, my dear child, when a mother’s fair name is sullied, she bequeaths to her children an inheritance of shame; and yet, that being was born for better things. But, in degrees, we all are sure to rue a self-willed temper; and when we obstinately refuse to others the happiness which is within our power to confer, our selfishness——”

Without concluding the sentence, which had gradually assumed the tone of reflection, she suddenly said, “Poor Melton!” And then, turning to her daughter, added, “Could you trace any resemblance to the beautiful beggar-boy?”

“Too much!” thought Lady Helen, as she looked at the tattered garb of poverty in which the painter’s prophetic fancy had arrayed him. “Yes, indeed, mamma, I think—I fancy it

is like : now, don't you ?" was said aloud, with such calmness as Lady Helen could command.

" Why yes, my love, I confess the likeness may be traced, poor fellow ! By the way, I hope his future is about to brighten : there is a paragraph in to-day's paper which augurs well."

" How fervently I hope it may be true !" cried Lady Helen, catching at the words ; and ere there had been time to form one selfish hope with the wish she uttered, " How kind in you to name it ! Do, pray, let me hear what it is."

" You have often heard of his eccentric godfather, whose name he bears, Miles Melton, of Melton Lodge, and better known on the turf as Old Melton, of Melton ?"

" Oh, yes ! Is he dead ?"

" 'Tis said he was thrown from his horse on Friday last, and killed on the spot ; and that his immense wealth will go to his godchild, the present Sir Melton de Mowbray."

" Heaven grant it may be true !" exclaimed Lady Helen, with the burst of pure rejoicing ; and, as other more worldly thoughts suc-

ceeded — as her mother's love of wealth, the position in which she once had stood, flashed across her mind, hope revived, and burst its dreamy flowers with the suddenness of a Canadian spring. But, alas ! its glowing warmth was quickly chilled — its blossoms withered in succeeding doubt — *she once had been deceived*; and now, without uttering a word, she fixed her dark unfathomable eyes upon her mother, as if to read her thoughts and learn the truth.

“ Can you regret the kind wish you uttered ? ” said Lady Blankisle, glad to escape her daughter's gaze, and struck by the rapid change of expression from joy to melancholy.

“ No, no ! Indeed, dear mamma, nothing can change my wishes, nor turn my glad rejoicing to sorrow, but the fears of uncertainty — there are such idle reports in newspapers. Is it quite true ? ”

“ Indeed, I should think so, ” answered Lady Blankisle, though with something like confusion, while her eyes were fixed by the calm and melancholy gaze of her daughter.

“ Indeed, indeed ! ” echoed Lady Helen

twice, but in a tone so soft, that her lips, already parted as in intense anxiety, spoke without moving — it sounded like reflection passing mechanically to the embryo form of words.

“ Yes, indeed, my love ; and I think it more likely, as it revives the old whim of Melton, of Melton, who used to say his heir should marry his niece, Miss Lascelles. You must remember the report ? ”

“ I do,” replied Lady Helen with calmness, whatever might have been the inward pang. “ She is accomplished, beautiful, and amiable — is she not ? ”

“ I have heard so, my dear ; and, as the conditions do not seem to be severe, we may hope to see poor Sir Melton restored to the circles of fashion. Poor fellow ! I always liked him, and wish he may be happy.”

“ I wish it with all my heart ! ” rejoined Lady Helen fervently ; and she said it with a something of that springy lightness with which we wish joy to others, when hope whispers that we may witness and share the precious boon. There was a something in Lady Blank-

isle's fond expressions towards a wealthy heir lost to herself, which outstepped the truth, and seemed unnatural. If Lady Helen did not doubt, she did not implicitly believe.

Had she positively disbelieved, there would have been but justifiable cause. Lady Blank-isle was correct in speaking of the paragraph which had appeared, but she took care to say nothing of another which appeared a few days afterwards, and ran as follows : —

“ MR. EDITOR,

“ ‘ Old Melton, of Melton’ (as you style him), is still alive. For the benefit of his friends allow me to say thus much ; for the benefit of those who invent lies about his affairs, let me add, his arm is still strong enough to use a hunting-whip.

“ Yours, *in propriâ personâ*,

“ MILES MELTON.”

Though it be taking Time by the tip of his forelock, it may be well to add, in conclusion, that within a week, and, of course, while Lady Helen might still believe that “ Old Melton”

was no more, Lady Blankisle repeated her visit, and through the mamma an offer was made from his Grace the Duke of Dublin. A calm but decided refusal was returned—it was in vain that the advantages of establishment, pin-money, and independence, were set forth and urged.

“Never, never, mamma!—it cannot be. I might esteem his Grace, but I could not love him. Urge me no further.”

“Esteem, my love, would quickly kindle to a warmer feeling, and lead to happiness more sure, more lasting, than that which springs from passion, and dies from its intensity. Do not, my child, be rash—do not utterly reject a suit which would place you above the world. Remember, Helen, your father has no fortune to bestow—reflect.”

“My mother,” answered Lady Helen solemnly, “I have reflected, I have deeply searched my heart, and *am decided*. My hand alone were unworthy of the Duke, and would seal the misery of both. I would rather starve, or live by my labours.”

“You speak like a child!” cried Lady

Blankisle, with rising anger, as once more she glanced with bitterness on the print from Sir Joshua Reynolds's painting, and her daughter's drawings.

"I may," replied Lady Helen firmly; "but, should the trial come, you will find I can exert the firmness of a woman."

"At least," said Lady Blankisle, seeing it was wiser to curb her displeasure and attempt to argue, "you speak with the spirit of romance rather than in the tone of reality. Suppose for the moment you were reduced to the necessity which you now have the courage to brave, think you these drawings, perfect as they are, would gain a livelihood for Lady Helen Fawndove?" And, while the pale lips of the marchioness curled with scornful satire, she awaited her daughter's reply.

"If they have the merit you assign," said Lady Helen with diffidence, "I should hope they might; and if it were an act for which I ought to blush, my name need not appear. You forget, mamma, how much you paid for the trifle in your boudoir, with nothing but initials."

“ Forget, my child ! my simple-minded child ! No, I have not forgotten, and never, never shall I forget the bitter lessons taught me in the hour of poverty. I once thought as you do now — I made the trial — I offered my works for sale. In teaching you the truth, I must speak, though you may deem me vain. They, like yours, had merit ; but the man, the plodding master of the shop, behind his counter, knew not their worth, at least when offered for his purchase. He bowed and simpered to the lady whom he deemed a customer ; he praised, when I humbly asked for his opinion, the works he did not understand : and when I confessed the humiliating purport of my visit, he rated them as next to nothing, and looked disdainfully upon me, the poor but proud and high-born beggar ! Helen, my child, be guided by your mother. Poverty is a curse — it is the yoke which fetters genius to the earth, while plodding fools gorge upon its brains, and fatten on the prey which cannot burst its shackles — the iron bonds of poverty ! Beware ! be wise, my child ! Talent, genius, accomplishments — nothing can save you from

the pangs which I have felt, and never can forget ! ”

It is said there is one weak point on which all but fools are mad. Assuredly, be the degree of madness what it may, there are few who have not some rankling wound, which throbs with agony when touched. With Lady Blankisle it was the ordeal of her younger days ; even now the picture of her former sufferings revived the torture she had endured, and, mingled with the anxious fears of a mother, it defied control—nature triumphed—she clasped her daughter in her arms, and sobbed aloud.

“ My child, my beloved child ! ” cried the mother, when able to recover from this burst of feeling, “ it is for you, for you alone, I shed these tears.”

Lady Helen could make no answer, but acknowledged her gratitude by pressing her mother’s hands within her own, and kissing the cheeks, still wet with the peerless fountain of the heart.

“ Say, Helen, that you will not utterly reject the duke.”

Lady Helen in vain attempted to reply.

“ Think, my child, how destitute you will be when your father dies.”

“ May Heaven protect his life !” cried Lady Helen, finding utterance as she imaged the possibility of death to one she loved so dearly.

“ I unite in the prayer ; but remember all must die, and, in the course of nature, your father first.”

“ But, dear, dear mamma, what you have borne I could bear, and you gained the independence you sought,” said Lady Helen, glad to evade an answer to Lady Blankisle’s request, and still clinging to the determination of suffering all things, rather than part with the hallowed image of him whom now she could treasure in her heart, and yet be sinless.

“ I did,” returned the marchioness, who by this appeal was instantly restored to her bitter firmness. “ Yes, I did earn my bread, and envied the beggar his broken victuals, who won his pittance from kind, if pampered menials. I earned my bread ; but how ? Was it not flung to me like the envied crust the toothless cannot eat ? Was it not watered by

my tears? Yes, I sold my works; but how? What was the produce of my weary toils? Others reaped the harvest I had sown, and grudged me the tithe they promised. Day by day the payment was deferred, and doled at last with scornful pity. Could Helen, Lady Helen, endure thus much?"

A deep sigh was the only answer, but the lips and hands were closed and compressed, as if some effort of determination were passing in the mind.

"Or could you," continued the marchioness, "submit to the keener torture which awaits the lady-governess, who must bear the caprice, the insolence, or ignorance of rich vulgarity? My child, your rank, your title, your gentleness—all, all forbid it. And, oh! I pray you, ere the roses perish"—as she said this she once more smiled, and touched her daughter's cheek—"secure the station you were born to grace. Tell me you——"

"But papa says," cried Lady Helen, interrupting the request she dreaded, "indeed papa tells me he hopes to save me a small

independence. I am dead to the splendours the world, and if papa ——”

“ Your father, my dear, is a ——, a child, like yourself, in some things,” said the marchioness, interrupting in her turn her daughter’s forlorn hope, yet pausing ere she pronounced judgment on her husband: “ but I insist on your taking until to-morrow to reflect.”

Ere Lady Helen could say a word she was alone, and the manœuvrer left the wretched daughter to ponder over the arguments she had heard, and tremble at the picture of the days of poverty.

The morrow came : Lady Helen’s determination was still unchanged ; the Duke of Dublin’s suit was slowly and unwillingly rejected through her who had pleaded his cause. It would be but an idle tribute to Lady Helen’s beauty, her gentleness and fascinations, to say how many times her hand was sought within the two years since Mowbray resigned his claim. We cannot, however, but mention this fact, that not one amidst the many offers was

ventured in person. Whether this arose from that peculiarity of eyes, which, like the dark beauties of night, were never wanting in expression, and yet defied their admirers to read their mysterious depths; or, whether the manœuvrer first led the eligible of the land within the fascination of those charms we have endeavoured to describe, and then, supplying the place of some warlike brother, hinted that some explanation was due; or whether —. But time presses — the reader must fancy what he will, and try to image those dark orbs of light, to which no language can do justice.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GREENWICH PENSIONER, AND A WRECK IN
THE ROADSTEAD.

“ We tars are all for fun and glee,
A hornpipe was my notion :
Time was, I’d dance with any he
As sail’d the salt sea ocean.

But one day, called my gun to ram,
And face the foe advancing,
A splinter queered my larboard gam,
And, d—— me, spoilt my dancing.”

Jack at Greenwich.

It has already been confessed, that Mr. De la Bere had a large proportion of the good things of this world to console him for the vows of celibacy. He had found—and who has not?—that, as the world was constituted, no man can live upon the mere exaltation of sentiment; and though he still cherished—nay, and did

cherish until the day of his death—the early vision of Julia Saladin, it never betrayed him to the follies of romance. If he remembered her when pure as the dewdrop, which neither moistens nor mingles with the leaf on which it rests, it was only as such that she dwelt within his memory : he did not, to pursue the metaphor, live in the hour of darkness when his hopes were blasted, and the stormy passions of the heart swept this heavenly gem from the leaf on which it rested, to mingle with the soil of earth. No ; on the contrary, this treasured vision was to him like some pure and glorious dream which haunts our sleep, and hovers around our waking thoughts. We know that it was but a dream, but still we feel its influence ; our mind is purified, our passions softened, and we arise with good and kindly feeling towards our fellows, and towards every living thing.

Such was its general effect on Mr. De la Bere's habits. It was to him a pleasure to work out the happiness of all ; and this feeling became so natural, that he identified himself with the world in which he lived ; and, though

verging to eccentricity in some things, he joined, for the most part, in its customs. What he did, he liked to do well; amidst other things, he liked to give a good dinner, though more to gratify his guests than himself. He was far from the charge of epicurism; further still from that selfishness which led the Duke of Norfolk to play a solo on turtle and a haunch of venison. As the reader has already been admitted to his dining-room, it is scarcely necessary to add, that he loved his glass—we need not scruple to say, his bottle—of port. It was the fashion of his day, one which he followed, though never to that excess which then too often debased those meetings which were meant to gladden the heart of man. Though generous to extremes, Mr. De la Bere never allowed the bottle to circulate at his own table until reason was clouded or extinguished; but it did his heart good to see the drooping spirits rise, and sparkle like his wine—to mark the frame, exhausted by fatigue, renew its strength—to listen to the wit which flashed from Sheridan, or hear it answered by one whose talents mantled with the rosy shower, and

opened in its warmth. With moderation in the chair, who shall forbid the grape its given purpose? Who but they, who, wanting in self-command, practise the abuse of gifts on earth. Who, when the immortal Pitt (we sink all party views) — the one who, while yet “an angry boy,” had stood as the pilot of a great nation — who, when they saw this bold and mighty helmsman sinking in glorious poverty to an early grave, would have denied the cordial which revived his powers? Who would have snatched the flask from him whose youth and intellect were lavished and expended to baffle the stormy elements which shook Old England to its centre? It would not have been the judges of the land; for they, or some amongst them to the highest, still think it lawful to trim the evening lamp with at least one bottle of port, and thus revive the body sinking from the labours of the day.

Mr. De la Bere was still in Greenwich Park, surrounded with a young and happy audience, telling how this was made, where that was grown, and answering, like a speaking dictionary of arts, the thousand queries which

spring from the opening mine of childhood's thoughts.

“ Hush ! hark ! ” he cried, as he counted six by the clock, which surprised him in his bliss. “ Get ye gone, ye dear little fascinating rogues, I have lost the tide, and shall lose my dinner. Good bye, God bless you all ; and now for a scramble ; ” and putting his hand into one of his many pockets, he pulled out a store of bright new silver coin, from one penny to four, and cast it amongst the astounded group.

The *ruse* answered. While the little innocents gathered up the glittering shower, and ran to mammas or nurses to shew their prize, “ the great, tall, kind gentleman ” had gained some yards towards the royal hospital.

What was to be done ? To return in time by water was impossible. Mr. De la Bere thought of a “ neat post-chaise,” and the Green Man at Blackheath (then in its glory), but the distance was too great ; and he determined upon seeking some conveyance in the dirty Greenwich, or dirtier Deptford.

Stages abounded in those days, as steam-carriages threaten to do in these ; and the Kent

Road, as it was then styled, overflowed with dirty carriages and white mud. As railroads are likely to drain the high-roads of both one and the other, it may amuse some future antiquaries to record that the vehicle, called *omnibus*, was originally English, and not copied from the French. It existed and travelled long since, under the name of "*caterpillar*;" nor, considering its pace and proportions, was the term inapt.

"Plenty of room, sir," cried a satellite of such a machine, which was standing by the pavement. "First turn—start directly—just going, sir."

"Do you take me for a crab, and born to go sideways?" answered Mr. De la Bere sharply, to the importunings which increased as he neared the long green caterpillar, and with a half flourish of his oak he brushed off the attendant insect.

"You're a rum fish, if you ben't a crab," halloo'd the boy, with the caddish wit of his day.

Without noticing this impertinence, Mr. De la Bere made his way for a lighter-looking

vehicle some paces in advance, when, in a voice rough and hoarse as the winds, he heard—

“Heave a-head, you land lubber, you swore you’d weigh anchor an hour ago.”

The spokesman was a wooden-legged pensioner, rigged in his best, and bound for London.

Master coachey was deaf as a mile-stone.

“Heave a-head, or shiver my timbers, if I don’t cut and run,” he added, with, of course, a sailor’s oath; and, standing on the timbers he threatened to shiver, he made demonstrations of leaving the wicker basket in which he was seated aft, and which, in those times, was the contrivance for outside passengers.

“Better bide where you be, captain,” said satellite the second, as he ventured to seize a wooden leg *in transitu*. “You arn’t got your shoes on, and can’t run on drum-sticks.”

“Eh! my gallant friend; what! bound for the port of London?” cried Mr. De la Bere, as he neared the coach, and recognised an old acquaintance.

“Yes, your honour,” answered Jack Bow-sprit, with a hearty salute, as he checked his

rising wrath, and snatched the stray timber toe from the satellite's grasp.

“ So am I, Jack, if I know how.”

“ Snug birth, your honour, in the cabin, if we could but get afloat,—tight craft, but rum rigging. These landsmen calls it a *eunic-horn* (unicorn); but, d—— me, if that bit of bones, as runs a-head, ben't more like a Bowsprit than I am.”

Mr. De la Bere looked inside the cabin; it chanced to be clean, and seeing only two respectable-looking females, he hailed the coachman, and promised to pay for all the vacant seats if he would start immediately. The bargain was soon concluded; and Jack was made happy by setting sail with a crew of tidy lasses in the basket, and “ the noble commodore ” in the cabin—for thus was the bachelor styled by the pensioners. Mr. De la Bere was a man certain to pick up something, wherever he was. Suiting himself to his companions, he soon led them out, and found that one was a widow of a merchant captain, who resided at Hackney; the other, her friend, and a maiden sister of a poor, but brave midship-

man with sixty years of age, and almost as many wounds.

“ Hackney! Hackney!” repeated De la Bere, as he tried to recall some associations with the place. “ Doesn’t Tom Somerset live there? do you happen to know him?”

“ The Right Honourable Mr. Somerset, the nobleman that lived in the large red house with high walls and iron gates?” asked the widow, as she drew herself up, and looked as if indignity had been offered to her honourable neighbour.

“ A thousand pardons, madam,” said Mr. De la Bere, with comic gravity. “ ’Tis, doubtless, the same: he and I were schoolfellows, and we always called him ‘ Tom.’ I once knew him well. Is he living?”

“ Living, sir! why, he has been dead these twenty years or more. My friend, the Right Honourable Mrs. Somerset, is living.”

“ Mrs. Somerset! hem!” said Mr. De la Bere, surprised in his turn.

“ Yes, sir,” continued the widow, “ and he has left her wonderfully well off—such jewels, and a carriage. I dined there this day week,

and we each had silver forks (*'fam-ly plate,'* as she called it), and a little spare table-cloth, cockled up like a cabbage."

"Indeed, madam! I hope the guests did not suffer from indigestion?" said De la Bere, with pretended admiration at such fare.

"She is but a purse-proud queen," put in the maiden, before the widow could reply. "For my part I'm glad she didn't ask me, for I'm sure I shouldn't have gone. I mind what people used to say about her—she warn't always called the Honourable Mrs. Somerset."

"Mere envy, my dear Miss Spicer. How I wish you had been there!"

"You're very kind, madam; but I don't wish nothing of the sort, for my belief she's no better than she should be."

"Few of us are, madam," said Mr. De la Bere, who saw the storm of envy which was brewing between the two friends. "Poor Tom! I have long lost sight of him. When I knew him he was always about the court."

"Dear me, sir, do you live in those parts? Well, I always said that he was accustomed to the great folk, and that that woman was no

company for him. For my part I don't believe she was ever ——”

“ Fie, fie! Miss Spicer,” interrupted the widow, who had partaken of her honourable feast, eaten with the “*fam-ly* plate,” and sat with “the little table-cloth,” *alias* napkin, spread on the back of her chair, to save her lace and silks.

“ Had they any children?” asked De la Bere, still anxious to preserve peace.

“ Children!” echoed Miss Spicer: “ the like of them seldom do, sir.”

Mr. De la Bere's inquiry was ill-timed; and he was thinking what question he should next put, when a violent and united screech arose from the female crew in the basket behind. The kind-hearted bachelor's head was out of the window in an instant, and having called to the coachman to stop, he looked back, and saw his friend, “ Jack Bowsprit,” with all the lasses about him, some thirty yards off, and launched in the wicker-boat into the deep sea of white mud; the tackle had given way, and dropped them astern.

“ Avast there, my hearty!” shouted old

Jack Bowsprit; "tack about, and take us in tow."

"Save me! save my child!" cried one of the crew, who had fallen to the bottom of the basket, and was now struggling to get out.

"Give the babby to me," said Jack, handling the child as gently as he would a compass; "and you, mother, bring your stern to an anchor, while I takes the young un to shore; I can't get cold in my feet: and as for my mud-boots, the next spring-tide will brush them clean as a quarterdeck." So saying, with a bouncing boy in one arm, with a stick (a relic from his ship) in one hand, and two sticks on his stumps, Jack fearlessly waded to shore through mud and water, at least one foot deep!—What would Mac, the stony son of Adam, have said to such a road? be it asked by the way.

By the time the child was deposited on the footway other carriages had stopped, foot passengers had collected; and the stage having drawn to the side, Mr. De la Bere was soon conspicuous amongst the many.

At this moment an open carriage with four

horses and two postilions drove up; and, though it bore the royal arms, it was obliged to stop, owing to the vehicles which kindness or curiosity had collected.

As the Princess of Wales and “England’s hope,” her lovely and ill-fated daughter, were then living in their solitude at Blackheath, such equipage was too familiar to attract much of Jack Bowsprit’s attention; he still had the “babby” in his arms, and was quieting its fears by dancing it in the air, when a joyous, handsome young man, stood up in the royal carriage, and something very like “D—— it!” escaped the lips; which added, with a smile, “that is more than I could do for my niece, little Charlotte, though I’ve served in the cockpit;” and, turning to one of the royal servants, Jack Bowsprit was ordered to approach.

“Well, my gallant fellow,” said the young man, “what has happened — have they let go the painter, and dropped the boat astern?” pointing to the basket, which still floated in the mud.

Jack, with brief and appropriate words,

explained how the good ship, called the *Eunic-horn*, had parted company with the jolly-boat; and with these particulars was mixed the name of "the noble commodore."

"Commodore! commodore! — Who? — where?" inquired the spokesman, with the quickness of one accustomed to reverence the title.

Jack pointed to the footway.

"Commodore! Why, d—— it, 'tis the noble-hearted De la Bere. Tell him his services are wanted: he must give up his seat to the shipwrecked, and accept one in this carriage."

Jack was turning to obey, when he was once more called back.

"Hark ye, Jack Bowsprit!" said the gentleman in the carriage, "there is a guinea from a messmate to drink the king's health, and the wooden walls of Old England."

"God bless them both, and may they both live for ever!" cried the veteran, in the warmth of his honest heart.

Jack proceeded on his mission, and approaching Mr. De la Bere, who, struck by his

singular position, had sought, in some measure, to escape from notice, he said, “ ‘That won’t do, your honour, there’s a signal flying, and my name ben’t Jack if you mus’n’t answer it; for, if ever I knew a seagull from a swab, that ere’s an admiral’s son at least.’ ”

“ The gallant young man in yonder carriage ? ”

Jack nodded — yes.

“ That, Bowsprit, is the king’s son — it is the Duke of Clarence.”

“ Shiver my timbers if I didn’t think so ! ” cried Jack, while he opened his eyes in wonderment ; “ why, he called me messmate, and gave me a guinea to drink the British navy. He’s a sailor every inch, and tthere can’t be nothing better. God bless him ! ”

Jack’s blessing had scarcely been uttered ere the course was cleared, the royal carriage drove to the footpath, and Mr. De la Bere was welcomed by the naval prince, who pointed to a vacant seat, and gave orders to drive on.

Jack Bowsprit waved his hat, and gave the signal for a parting huzza !

“ I told you so, Miss Spicer,” said the widow to her friend, catching sight of Mr. De la Bere as the four horses dashed by, “ I knew he was a duke in disguise.”

“ He is quite the gentleman ; and that, I believe, is all you or I know about it,” replied the maiden.

“ You forget, Miss Spicer, when my poor dear captain was ashore, he and the Right Honourable Mr. Somerset were intimate as brothers. I am accustomed to quality, and I am sure that gentleman’s a duke.”

Miss Spicer would have it, that as far as they knew he was nothing but a gentleman, “ and that might be better than a duke, for aught she knew.”

Long ere their argument was concluded, “ the great unknown ” had reached the capital, and taken his expectant host by the hand.

CHAPTER VIII.

DINNER — CHIT-CHAT — ST. PAUL'S BY MOON-
LIGHT — THE TWO MOURNERS — A CHAPTER
OF FACTS.

“ Mais de tous les edifices dont Londres a hérité du dixseptième siècle, Saint Paul est certainement le plus magnifique. Nous avons déjà parlé de son dôme qui peut librement développer sa tête gigantesque dans le ciel ; quant à la base elle reste enfoncée au milieu des masures du quartier marchand qui l'étouffent de toutes parts. *C'est un tort des Anglais : leur plus beaux monumens manquent d'air.*”

B. LA ROCHE.

“ My dear De la Bere, what can have made you so late ?” asked Sir Melton de Mowbray, as he welcomed his friend on the steps of his house. “ I was fearful of some accident.”

“ All's well. You shall hear, by and by, how, like Gulliver, I have been pinned by Lilliputians. Now for my toilet ; you know I am a Turk in ablutions, eh ! What ! all ready,

Martha? done as I ordered? Well, wait a little longer. Which is your dressing-room, Melton? Hot water! no, Martha, no; but oceans of cold," said Mr. De la Bere, addressing first one, then the other, as he ascended the stairs to attend to a point in which the bachelor was precise.

"Dinner's on the table, sir," said the impatient Martha, as she presently tapped at the door, "and I fear it's all spoiled, sir."

"Mine the sorrow—mine the fault," said De la Bere, quoting from the then popular ballad of Goldsmith; "but well my knife shall play," he added, with a laugh at the version which his sharpened appetite suggested.

The bachelors, old and young, descended.

"What's this, Martha?" cried the younger, when, instead of the simple mutton chops with flowery potato in its jacket, he looked upon turtle soup and turbot.

"All right! 'mine the fault' again. Capital foundation for a mutton chop dinner! But, Martha, another time never put on the fish until we've done with the soup: you, who live with a bachelor, ought to know that. Come,

Melton, my dear boy, you know I do as I like in this house; a short grace, if you please.— Good—and now, you like the green fat?”

“Forgive my heresy, I never touch it.”

“Name it not within the city walls!” cried De la Bere, solemnly. “Had Solomon said so to an alderman, he would have been pronounced nothing better than a spoon: nevertheless, I never eat it myself, Melton,” was breathed in the softest possible whisper across the table.

“I am sure we are unworthy. Your liberality will train me badly for the hardships of a soldier’s life.”

“Psha! psha! I wont hear of that; and as to liberality, it costs me nothing. My West India agents stuff me with turtles, and, until I got the hint from a worthy citizen, I knew not what to do with them: now I march them off to Alderman Twigg, the cook, pastrycook, and colonel. Do you know him?”

“By reputation.”

“You could know him by nothing better, except his works: let me give you one ladleful more. Well, as I was saying, he deserves

his name. Aldermen are no fools, as far as cooking goes; and, remember I am talking to a banker,—with Mr. Alderman Twigg I open an account.”

“How so?” asked Mowbray, with a smile at the notion.

“Easy enough: he weighs my turtle and first gives me credit for so many pounds, not sterling; he then reduces the whole to quarts, and makes me debtor,—*not doctor*, remember.”

“Spare me, spare me,—you prefer the fin, don’t you?” asked Mowbray, as he carved the turbot, and who, as yet, had scarcely learnt to laugh at his first essays in arithmetic. “And a little of the horse-radish? You see, Martha has remembered your rules; it is fresh, pungent, light as flakes of snow, and curling like a counsellor’s wig.”

“Hold! enough! my dear Melton, you seem determined to stop my mouth, and make my eyes water too,” exclaimed Mr. de la Bere; and, with an arch smile in the corner of the said mouth, he continued—“Well, well, we’ll drop the doctor, to conclude my account with the alderman. He first credits me for quarts,

in proportion to the weight, and then debits me in the same measure as I draw upon his kitchen,—he is the first accomptant in the city.”

“ Indeed !”

“ Nothing like him and his cheesecakes in this world ; and if you had but his skill in addition and division, you’d grow as rich as the alderman.”

“ How so ?”

“ By these two simple rules,—he makes them half the size of any others, and charges twice as much as any body else.”

“ And if quality be balanced against quantity, that is but just ;—you must taste this madeira.”

“ With all my heart. Old D’Aubigny’s ? eh ! Sweet as the bouquet of a crushed filbert,” exclaimed Mr. De la Bere, as he offered the rising essence to his nose. “ Velvety as soft Italia’s air,” he added, as he opened his compressed lips and put down the glass ; “ by Jove ! it is magnificent — wants a little more warmth. Martha, are you butler ? Well, another time remember you draw the cork

in the morning. And now for the bachelor's chop, eh ! Melton ; that will be a capital key-stone to my foundation of turtle and super-structure of turbot."

Martha departed, and the bachelor, warming with his nutty wine, continued —

" Melton, my dear fellow, I cannot tell you how much I enjoy this snuggerly, instead of the parade which my honest old butler will insist on."

" Are you quite serious ?" asked Mowbray, who, having been compelled to the change, was not equally alive to its charms.

" Indeed, I am ; to quote once more from my favourite ballad — ' Man wants but little here below ' " —

" Certainly not, after turtle and turbot," said Mowbray, as he laughed at his friend's allusion to the hermit's fare : " I suppose a haunch of venison would complete the ' little ? ' "

" I deserve your satire. But, in sober prose, then, I contend that men should learn from women the art of waiting ; they glide about like silent sylphs — they read your wants —

are always ready, and never hurried—they prove——”

“ Hush! hark to Martha’s silent step!”

“ Psha! a libel, Melton; ’twas only the creaking stair. They prove,” added De la Bere, in a whisper, as Martha sailed into the room with two covered plates, “ what fair woman can do, when she bridles her tongue and does nothing but her duty.”

It might be an odd moment, an odder association, which linked one thought to another; but, without stopping to attempt analysis, we state the fact, that those words, spoken with the sudden gravity of undertone, recalled to Mowbray’s mind the recollection of his mother, and of her whose lock of hair moved with the pulses of his heart. A mind strongly sensitive on one point may be forced to traverse, but, like the needle, with the first moment of calm, it returns to the power of attraction. Mr. De la Bere read the abstraction of his host, and, framing some order to send Martha from the room, he filled Mowbray’s glass, then his own, and said, in a subdued tone—

“ Melton, my dear boy, if you have dined, 'tis time to drink a health—‘ To ain I love dearly.’ I never quote Homer in the city—God bless you both, and never despair.”

Mowbray was instantly recalled to himself, yet acknowledged that his thoughts had been read by drinking off his glass while a blush was still upon his cheeks.

We must, however, bring our bachelors' banquet to a close. Though there are some imaginative lovers of good things, who might be amused with Mr. De la Bere's quaint commendations of blending the lily with the rose, in other words, of strewing the spawn of a hen lobster on the princely turbot—“ a good old fashion, which told like the berried holly amidst a merry Christmas”—similes which confounded poor Martha, though she just understood she was praised, and that nothing escaped the bachelor's eye; others might like to wander with him to the wonders of the deep, which the *hen* lobster, with her countless eggs, suggested—others to listen to his chemical theory of turning blue into scarlet by boiling; but there is only space

to say, that this generous being once more alluded to his credit with Alderman Twigg, to reproach, as kindly as he could, Mowbray's pride for never touching a penny of the five thousand pounds at his command.

“Remember,” he said, as Martha removed the cloth, and exposed some dark mahogany as bright as a looking-glass, “you have unlimited credit with the alderman; supply your table as you will, and I hope you will condescend to rid me of this superfluity, though you are too proud to make me happy by taking from a lonely old bachelor trash which he will never need.”

“Your sisters—you forget your three sisters,” said Mowbray, attempting to evade a theme on which his resolution was formed.

“My sisters! forget them! never—never; Heaven's blessing on the dear devoted creatures! No, no, Melton; but they in their love for their brother, are as great fools as I for——Psha! they will never marry—they are wedded to me and old Southam—they want for nothing—besides, they have just reduced their establishment.”

“ Indeed ! that sounds like necessity.”

“ Not a bit ; they have only narrowed the circle of their wants.”

“ Obligated to do so ?”

“ Ay, for once, by that tyrant, Fashion. They have taken to bell-hoops, and reduced a circumference of many yards to a few. It is the first change they have made for these twenty years, and I will stake my life they will never make nor need another, till all their wants are buried in the grave. Melton, I love you as a son ; why not let me act towards you as a father ?”

“ My friend ! my more than friend ! no son could feel your kindness more deeply, or love you more dearly ; but first let me struggle to be free ; as yet, I want for nothing, and if I ever do ——”

“ You promise to apply to none but me ? Speak—say yes, you proud incorrigible boy, or I will never taste a glass of your port—speak !”

“ I do—I promise thus much,” said Mowbray, sternly ; and then, with something of the playfulness of former years, he added,

“and now, papa, let your dutiful son fill a bumper of port.”

“With all my heart; but it shall be drunk to your future success.”

Mr. De la Bere drank off the toast, and, as he put down the glass, he said, with an oath (for gentlemen, alas! in those days swore without being fined five shillings), “Melton, you have opened my heart as well as my mouth—that ruby grape had never mingled with my blood, if you had not made me happy by promising.”

“Only in case of need to open your purse, and make it bleed. But I hate these operations, so a truce with the theme; I have a thousand things to tell.”

“And I to ask.”

“First, say, how do you like old D’Aubigny’s vintage—shall I change the bin?”

“Heaven forbid!”

“‘*The hermit cried,*’ I suppose you meant to add,” said Mowbray, with a smile.

“True, Melton,” said Mr. De la Bere, joining in the laugh; “and the hermit tells you, you could not change it for the better.

Look how the rich and racy drops gather to the bottom of the empty glass, like liquid rubies—old D'Aubigny learnt wisdom in old England, though he raved of *la belle France*, and christened the black court after the skeleton vines which he planted in remembrance of his country. But tell me, for I am anxious, did you not say you had six lawyers in your employ?—Beware! you'll never get clear of their clutches."

"What can I do? I am obliged to select them, like tools, for their temper. I need a clever rogue to trap a rascal; a sharp one to spy a sharper; a saint for the saintly, whose godliness outweighs their justice; a gentleman for gentlemen: in short, I cannot pay others, unless I oblige others to pay me, and I am obliged to fight the world with its own weapons. As to chancery ——"

"Chancery!" exclaimed Mr. De la Bere, with a look of horror; "you'll never be free as long as you live. What induced you to go there?"

"I was led there much against my inclination, but had no alternative. One Gohen,

a debtor to the house in some thousands, refused to pay; I was obliged to proceed against him, and he modestly filed a bill in chancery, and made *me* out *his* debtor to the amount of some hundreds."

"The lying scoundrel!—and what then?"

"I was obliged to put in my answer—by the way, let me put some wine in your glass."

"Thank you, thank you," replied De la Bere, as he mechanically extended his glass; which, however, he put down untasted.

"Well, go on—what effect had your answer?"

"This bill was dismissed as a tissue of falsehood, but in the interim he had gained time, which was his only hope or object; the cause was tried at common law—I instantly gained a verdict for the amount with interest."

"And the result?"

"Why, as the next *ruse*, the Jew went to prison, and from thence offered terms, which, as a choice of evils, I was fain to accept; the bills of lawyers on both sides amounted to more than the original debt;

these were paid by him, and *I* got less than half of what was due to me."

"So, in plain English, a man justly indebted to you in thousands, can swear you owe him hundreds, file a bill in chancery against you, and yet, if you prove him a perjured scoundrel, he is not to be punished."

"Even so."

"By heaven!" cried De la Bere, with a rap on the table which would have done credit to his friend, Charles Fox, "that is a foul blot upon our laws, a gross perversion of the means of justice! Melton, when you join me in the House, we must seek to reform that hydra, chancery: have you any other instances?"

"Many and many I have heard of, where rich men have deferred the payment of a just debt for years and years, until delay, expense, or death, had defeated their adversaries."

"I cannot bear to think of it. Ah! well-a-day! so here"—lifting the glass to his lips—"is 'Confusion to the wicked.' And pray, is Mr. Plastic your saintly gentleman lawyer?"

"Even so—I could select no other. He

has all my title-deeds; and his kind patron was long the legal adviser to my poor father."

"Ah! poor old Truetape! he was an honest lawyer; but, beware of his successor: I like not that Plastic, though he does lift his eyes and hands to heaven, and quote Scripture, like the devil, to his own purpose. Why, Melton, that man is a murderer!"

"A murderer!" repeated Mowbray, with surprise, and doubting, from the expression of Mr. De la Bere's face, whether he was in earnest.

"Ay, Melton, a murderer after the righteous fashion of those savages who think it a duty to kill their aged fathers, to save them the trouble of dying."

"Did Plastic slay his father?"

"That were difficult to say of one who was picked out of the kennel, and was never known to possess either father or mother. No — no — it was to one who had been to him more than most fathers that he performed this sacred duty."

"To his patron, old Truetape?"

"The same; the poor old man was in

his bed, and on his road to heaven, humbly hoping he was about to reap the harvest of honesty amidst temptation. He had long suffered from water on his chest, and, as fits of coughing returned, it was necessary to lift him up to prevent a speedy suffocation: and never shall I forget how Plastic shewed the white of his black eyes as he described the last moments of his benefactor."

"What said he?"

"Having expatiated on the blessing of those who die the death of the righteous, he said, the Lord smote his heart with pity for the sufferings of his Christian brother; once more the cough returned — his hands were outstretched for aid to raise his sinking frame — with stoic virtue the prayer was unheeded — there was a rattling in the throat — a rumbling in the chest — the struggle was soon over — and the good old man slept in the slumber of death."

"But — but — De la Bere — your gentle nature leads you to severity; Plastic would not have told you the particulars, had he thought he did wrong."

“ It was murder, nevertheless : we have but one name for each crime, though in no two cases are the degrees of guilt equal and alike. Let us hope that this verged within a hair’s breadth of justifiable homicide. You or I could not have done so ; and may such a friend never tend our dying moments ! I like not the man : but, where’s the bottle — with me ? ”

“ Even so ; now, to change the subject, let me hear your day’s adventures.”

Mr. De la Bere complied ; and when he came to the mention of “ the Honourable Mrs. Somerset,” Mowbray interrupted him with an exclamation, and declared that she must be the widow of the man, whose death and childless state it was necessary to prove in order to complete the title of an estate he had sold. A few further inquiries convinced Mowbray it was the same ; and he proposed a visit on the morrow to the widow.

“ Widow ! forsooth ! ” cried Mr. De la Bere, with a smile ; “ it is Miss Betty Flanders whose attestation you must procure ; she was once a pretty *figurante*, and became to

foolish Tom what my staid sisters would term a concubine: he lost himself to his friends and the world by the degradation of such unhallowed alliance. But, we'll seek her out to-morrow. I know enough of lawyers to be aware that, if we wish to hasten their work, we must do it ourselves: '*festina lente*' is their wise motto; and writing letters is more profitable than actual inquiry. While I think of it, have you ever asked Plastic for his bill?"

"A thousand times."

"Got it?"

"No — that I always have heard is difficult; but I have this day paid him some thousands; and I have his letter, in which he expresses his conviction that he is already overpaid; and nothing will gladden him more than to find the necessity of refunding a balance in my favour."

"The monstrous hypocrite!" cried Mr. De la Bere, with energy; "such joy is scarcely in the nature of an honest man, much less in a lawyer: beware of that saintly murderer."

One subject led to another; hour after hour stole imperceptibly away, while Mowbray detailed all that had occurred since last they met, or listened to the advice, anecdotes, or instructions, always to be derived from his kindest of friends. It was not until twelve successive strokes filled up a momentary pause that either dreamt of the witching hour of midnight.

“Is it possible?” cried Mr. De la Bere, as he raised his eyes to the timepiece on the chimney. “Do you close your city gates? Will watch and warder let me pass?”

“Always open: come, do not hurry; it is an age since we met. Another bottle of old D’Aubigny’s old port?”

“Not for the world!”

“’Tis scarcely stronger than his country’s clarets: just one more bottle?”

“Eh — no — indeed — I think — no — not for the world!” repeated Mr. De la Bere, as he still kept his chair, and allowed his eyes to wander from the empty glasses to the empty decanter.

“Well, then, we’ll just take the cream of

another bottle," said Mowbray, as he rose to interpret his guest's hesitation.

"The cream of another bottle!" echoed Mr. De la Bere, while his eyes twinkled with laughter: "and where, you insinuating dog, did you pick up that idea? I swear that you stole it from that wicked boy, Sheridan: go along, you clever thief!"

Without stopping to rebut the charge, Mowbray descended to the choice bin, and, ere he left the cellar, transferred the one more bottle into the decanter. He had scarcely brought it to the warm atmosphere of the dining-room ere the wine was concealed by a dew which fell upon the crystal glass.

We know not whether it was this magic veil of pearls which made it difficult to say when "the cream" had been skimmed, or whether it were the witchery of midnight, or the fascination of hearts which spoke in sympathy; but this we do know, that the time came when De la Bere started, upon lifting the bottle, and exclaimed—

"Why, Melton, how in the name of fairy-land is this?—the bottle is nearly empty?"

“Most unaccountable!” rejoined the equally astounded Mowbray, “can your fairies have changed it to the midnight dew we saw upon the glass?”

“There is no saying; but this I am sure of, your bottle of port is like syllabub: if there were cream at the top, there must be something better at the bottom.”

With these words the jovial bachelor divided all which the thievish elves had left, and pledged a farewell glass.

“What a glorious moon there must be somewhere!” cried Mr. De la Bere, as he stood in Vine-tree Court, and vainly sought to catch sight of the tranquil orb which shone on the upper parts of the narrow enclosure. “Come, Melton, get your hat; a walk on such a night is better than a bed: come, at least, as far as that human shambles, Temple Bar.”

Mowbray gladly acceded to the proposal. With few exceptions, the citizens were sleeping in their beds; there was a silent freshness in the air; not a light was moving in the many millions of windows; and it seemed as if the

houses—nay, the very granite of the streets—enjoyed the rest of night, and slumbered, like the weary, in the soft influence of their moonlight rays. The friends proceeded in silence for some way.

“This is as it should be,” said Mr. De la Bere, at length; and, after a pause of some minutes, in which he contemplated the effect of light and shade, he asked, “Did you ever look at St. Paul’s?”

“St. Paul’s!—a thousand times—seen it daily.”

“Ay, ay, millions upon millions may say that; it is not a moat which floats unnoticed in the air: but have you ever paused to look at, to admire, and feel, the beauties of that stately temple?”

“I fear, like the busy mass, my thoughts have been more intent upon the little things of earth.”

“So much the better—there are homely duties in the path of life which are imperative, and claim our first attention; the higher and intellectual thoughts are forbidden to the many; they may not be but as the holiday to the la-

bourer ; and when the labourer is weary, rest is the greatest happiness. The mass may be excused, but you, Melton, shall not be excused this night : this is the only hour, the only light, in which that noble pile can be viewed to advantage ; it were as easy to pray amidst the mob of the Stock Exchange, as pay a fitting tribute to yonder temple in the glare and tumult of the day. Look how solemn, stern, and dignified ! With what Godlike grace and majesty it breaks upon our view ! How our feelings travel with the outline of that mighty dome ! How our thoughts expand ! our bosoms bound ! as our eyes are lifted to the cross, which, touched by moonlight, glitters like a sign in heaven !”

“ I confess,” said Mowbray, in his low and silver tone, “ I never felt its grandeur until now, and never till now did I recall an observation I once heard, that the foul smoke of London had rather improved than injured the architect’s design.”

“ There is truth in the idea, especially in the moonlight hours—the bolder, projecting, weather-beaten points are relieved with double

force, and there is a sombre, soft, and mysterious depth given to the whole, which accords with the attributes of the almighty and invisible spirit. The exterior of St. Paul's, and the interior of St. Peter's, are each in their way sublime. An atheist would scarcely look on one, or stand within the other, without feeling his dim perceptions pass, and saying, 'Verily, there is a God that judgeth the earth, and a soul in the mind of man!'

"But silence and solitude are wanting for the growth of such deep and holy thoughts."

"True, my dear Melton, and as much so in the Eternal City as where we now stand. Here we must let the tide of traffic pass, and wait until its restless roaring waves are hushed in the dead of night; there we must not enter while halberts rattle on the sacred pavement — while the dancing plumes and wild fantastic dress of men mark the long line of guards which tend the pope, the should-be man of peace: no, Melton, even within that awful and unrivalled temple, we must wait until the pomps and panoply of

monkish rites have ceased — till the trampling step of countless crowds be past, ere we can catch the essence of sublimity, and feel our souls expand to God above!”

“How I envy you the happiness of a year at Rome! But, look yonder: there—again—do you not see a light rising amidst the tombs? and now, it moves like a star in that dark deep shadow. What can it be?” asked Mowbray, as he pointed to the rays which had attracted his attention.

“Ah! my poor friend, you are late to-night; watch for a time and you’ll also see a figure — poor mourner!” answered Mr. De la Bere, with a sigh.

“Your friend!” said Mowbray, with surprise, as he saw a figure in black, which appeared to rise from the dwelling of the dead.

“Such friendship as the faithful and the sad deserve from fellow man, I feel for yonder being.”

“Pray explain.”

“Smile not, Melton,” said De la Bere, as he took his arm, and they continued their

western course; "when I tell you, that in cities the romance and gentleness of life exist, though hidden, like moss, in the overgrown wilderness of trees; smile not, when I tell you yonder figure is an honest, simple, and respected shopkeeper, who, twelve long years ago, was widowed in heart and happiness by the loss of his wife; and the night never passes that he does not descend to her tomb, and pray beside her coffin."

"Extraordinary!" exclaimed Mowbray. "Yet, why should I say so?" he added, as he remembered where he himself was a dweller, and felt that no change could warp or lessen his affections for her who, though living, was lost to him.

Mr. De la Bere followed the dark current of his thoughts, and sought to turn them with a playfulness of manner which he could sometimes exert.

"It is not fair," he said, "in one whose horoscope is read, to tax your sympathy too sternly; I will allow you to smile, when I add, that yonder rich and honest mourner supplies my house with cheese and butter."

“ Thank you, my kind friend!” replied Mowbray, but without availing himself of the privilege offered to his youth; “ if my destiny, like yours, be not cast, I have lived to be, at least, a kinder man; misfortune has taught me to respect and honour the feelings of the humblest of mankind.”

“ Would that the probation were over!” cried Mr. De la Bere, as he warmly pressed the hand of his companion. “ You are a wiser and a better man; and, need I add how doubly I love and honour you? But you have been schooled enough, and now I long to see you in a nobler stage of life. But, come, since our feelings are in unison, let me shew you another—nay, I will confess it, to me a more touching proof of fidelity and love.”

With these words, Mr. De la Bere turned down a narrow passage, and, after some two or three windings, he stood by the iron railing of St. Bride’s Church.

“ Ay, there thou art, thou good and faithful creature!” he exclaimed, after looking steadfastly through the bars. “ See, Melton, he needs not the shed I ordered the sexton to

build ; but yonder he is lying, watching on the grave which divides him from the master he served when living."

"Who—what? I see no one—nothing but the tombs!"

Mr. De la Bere gave a gentle whistle, and Mowbray's attention was attracted by the head of a dog, which turned slowly to the summons, and then, looking full upon the bright moon, howled piteously, without quitting its station.

"Poor brute! yes, that soft planet is the mourner's lamp; and man, who may not read thy thoughts, can understand thy feelings. Come, poor fellow, if there be a stranger with me, he will love thee as I do."

Again Mr. De la Bere whistled and called—again the poor dog looked at the moon, and made its moan; it then arose, slowly approached its visitors, and, pausing at intervals, looked back upon the grave it had quitted with reluctance.

"There, poor fellow!" cried Mr. De la Bere, throwing it some biscuit, which invariably accompanied his visit; the dog looked in his face, wagged its tail, took the biscuit in its

mouth, dropped it, once more looked towards the grave, then upon his visitors, and, having spoken its silent thanks, it resumed its watch upon the spot which it had left but now.

“ I agree with you ! ” said Mowbray, as they still looked towards the lonely sentinel ; “ it is more touching than the grief of man ; *we* may cling to the hope of immortality—of meeting in brighter worlds ; but yonder brute, oh ! how I love the poet’s vision, which builds upon a brighter world for the faithful dog, the noble horse, and the humbler order of creation. My poor, poor Arab ! ” sighed Mowbray, as rushing thoughts linked the past with the present, and flew to the Downs of Dorset.

“ Good by ! ” said Mr. De la Bere, once more taking Mowbray by the arm. The dog acknowledged the kind voice of its friend, by looking round—it was neither insensible nor ungrateful, but its *love* was buried in the grave.

Mowbray, yielding to the fascination of companionship, accompanied Mr. De la Bere to his home.

“ Good night—good night, my dear Melton ! ” he said, as he pressed his hand with

affection; “ I rejoice in having, for once, tempted you beyond the city walls; but you must return quicker than you came—a storm is brooding.”

The night, indeed, was changing: dark, heavy masses of cloud had arisen, and threatened to obscure the moon, which, hitherto, had been without speck or blemish. Mowbray continued his homeward path, lost, for the most part, in that dreaminess of spirit which is often engendered by an extra glass of generous old port. Scarcely knowing more than that his course was eastward, his dreams were broken by a glare of light, sounds of music, and a mass of carriages collected in the square through which he was passing, the signals of some gay and splendid party. He paused, and the first impulse was to pass to the other side. Late as the hour was, there were still some idle loiterers by the hall-steps, to watch the coming or departure of the guests. Sudden as had been the impulse to turn aside, a wish to look once more on those with whom he once had seemed “ the gayest of the gay,” possessed his mind, and led, as it were, by some resistless, though

invisible power, he joined the crowd collected at the door. Let the reader imagine what were his reflections, as the faces of known and familiar persons, once ranked in the name of "friends," passed in review; whatever they were, they were quickly disturbed by a call which, ere now, has fallen on the reader's ear. — "Lady Blankisle's carriage!" vociferated a stentorian voice.

Mowbray started as if a shot had been unexpectedly fired: ere the carriage had separated from the mass, and driven to the door, he had retreated to the corner of a street which led to the square. Secure, as he deemed himself, from observation, he could not resist the temptation of looking back: he did so, and saw "the manœuvrer" leaning on the arm of her devoted marquess, while Lady Helen Fawndove was escorted by the Duke of Dublin; the door was closed, his grace bowed, and returned to the house as the carriage drove off.

Mowbray was rivetted to the spot. Had the proud impatient steeds been about to trample him beneath their feet, he felt that he could not have stirred; his gaze alone moved

with the approaching carriage. The moon suddenly burst from her veil of darkness—it fell upon his graceful and commanding figure as the carriage wheeled round the corner. Suddenly the black surface of the window was illumined by one who leaned forward with startled quickness, and there and thus the gazer lingered until a few brief instants hurried the equipage from sight.

Another succeeding cloud closed on the rays of light. Sir Melton de Mowbray deemed it the type of his sad destiny, and felt that the darkness of despair had fallen on his soul.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DOUBTFUL LADY.

“ You bear the specious title of a wife
To gild your cause, and draw the pitying world
To favour it.”

DRYDEN.—*All for Love.*

ON the following day, Mr. De la Bere surprised his *homme d'affaires*, by ordering his carriage to the door at twelve o'clock, instead of his saddle-horses; and still more, by commanding the attendance of two footmen.

“ It is to-morrow, sir, that the king holds his levee!” said the faithful old Jameson, as he ventured his remonstrance.

“ I know that, Jameson; but I am going to visit a great personage to-day, and something like state is necessary. See that the turn-out is complete!”

Jameson lingered awhile, as if he longed and looked for some further explanation; but receiving none, he departed in silence.

Precisely to the moment the carriage was at the door.

“Where shall I say, sir?” inquired the butler.

“To Chancery Lane — Messrs. Plastic and Bramble.”

“The lawyers, sir?” added Jameson, between surprise and curiosity.

“The same!” answered Mr. De la Bere, with indifference, and the order was accordingly given and obeyed.

It had been decided, that the presence of Plastic and his testament would be desirable in case the necessary evidence could be obtained. Mr. De la Bere shortly explained the intended visit; and the black man of the law having heard the case, prepared some blank affidavits, and exclaimed at intervals,—
“Was the like ever heard of in a Christian land?”

He, his black bag, book, and papers, were handed into the carriage without further delay.

The situation was novel to the godly lawyer, and the tempter led him to sit bolt upright, and look down, in the pride of his heart, upon the base pedestrians; for once he forgot to rail against the pomps and vanities of the world, or lift his eyes to heaven.

Lombard Street was quickly reached, and Sir Melton de Mowbray having taken his seat, the three within and three without started in quest of the *soi-disant* Right Honourable Mrs. Somerset.

“I lay my life that’s the house!” cried Mr. De la Bere, as he directed Mowbray’s attention to a line of fine old elm-trees by the roadside, the lower branches of which were tortured into vistas, and disclosed a dark red wall. He pulled the check-string, and, at a venture, ordered the carriage to stop at the wide gates of filigreed iron to which he pointed, and told the servant to inquire if Mrs. Somerset was at home. For the coachman to square his elbows, and pull up in face of the broad flags which led to the house; for the one footman to pull a bell which rang in a cage of open

iron work; for the other to stand with his hand on the handle of the carriage-door, was an affair of a few moments; but there the matter rested: the summons appeared to have caused more alarm than attention. When the bell rang, a head which, judging from the frills of a tumbled nightcap, was feminine, suddenly appeared at one window, and as suddenly retreated. About the same instant the old carved hall-door just opened, and a head, judging from the curl-papers, of the same sex, slowly peeped forth, and quickly popped in; while a third which, judging from the lather on the chin, was masculine, moved from a glass which hung in a lower window, and looked towards the gates, then disappeared with the glass in one hand, and a razor in the other.

“Ring again!” said Mr. De la Bere to his servant, after waiting some time.

“She is wild as her pelicans of the wilderness!” said Mowbray, with a smile, as he pointed to two birds of that species, which were sculptured in stone, and stood upon the square brick columns on either side of the gate,

feeding a group of hungry little ones with the blood of their bosom.

“ And her heart, I suspect, is of stone ; for she heeds not the voice of the stranger. Let us see if yonder gardener be spell-bound, like the birds and the brutes ! ” And Mr. De la Bere ordered his servant to hail the labourer.

The man, who hitherto had stood in wonderment, looking alternately towards the carriage and the house, now took a handful of nails from his mouth, relieved his hands of a hammer and shreds of list, by striking them into leather pockets strapped round his waist, and, coming from the wall on which he had been training an old pear-tree, he stepped from the plank which had been laid to protect the flower border, crossed an oblong patch of turf, and stood at the gates, hat in hand.

“ Is Mrs. Somerset at home ? ” asked the servant.

“ Yes, sure, my lord, for I saw her myself but now at the breakfast-room window.”

“ Come hither, my good man, open the gates,” said Mr. De la Bere, beckoning to the

gardener, thinking he might explain better than his London footman.

“Yes, my lord, coming directly!” answered the man, and away he hurried to the house, tapped at one of the basement windows, when she of the curl-papers handed forth a key.

The gate was opened, and, in language best suited to his comprehension, Mr. De la Bere explained to the gardener that Sir Melton de Mowbray and another gentleman wished to speak to Mrs. Somerset, and that their names and address were on their cards.

“Yes, my lord, but the liveryman will be here directly,” replied the gardener, as he rubbed his earthy hands, wiped them on his blue apron, and received the cards with diffidence.

He had scarcely started on his doubtful mission, when the hall-door was thrown open, a loutish servant burst into full appearance, and hurried down a flight of stone steps.

“The sun has risen at last!” said Mr. De la Bere, with his quaint, quick smile, as he eyed the flaring red breeches and waist-

coat, the many-buttoned coat of bright blue, scarlet, and gold, of the livery-servant.

“The blaze is intolerable! Why, the fellow has a comet on his shoulder, with its tail *en papillote*,” rejoined Mowbray, as he affected to shield his eyes from a staring epaulette, with long tags, which, luckily for his sight, were still covered up with silver paper.

The cards were delivered, the sun disappeared and reappeared, and the guests were ushered into a fine old drawing-room with panelled wainscot; on which, particularly over the fireplace, birds, flowers, fruit, and endless designs, were so exquisitely carved, that all the coats of flaring paint which had been added could not quite conceal the master's touch. The windows, four in number, looked into a long, wide strip of garden, with turf, espaliers, two magnificent cedar-trees, and —. But we must confine ourselves to the room. The ceiling, like the wainscot, had once been superb in its way, and not all the successive coverings of white-wash had destroyed the original design.

How far wealth and bad taste had added to the list of deformities, it were hard to say. The furniture, like the man's gold tags, was all *en papillote* of some sort or other, from the false bell-pulls to the Brussels carpet.

Another delay occurred, and the friends had time to survey the incongruous collection of ornaments, some under glass, others in cotton, or paper nightcaps.

“What's that? you've done mischief!” cried Mowbray, as Mr. De la Bere took a seat and saw him startled to his feet by the awful crackling made in descent.

“A pity Plastic is not here, he would be in his element,” said Mr. De la Bere, as he put his hand to the chair, and ascertained there was a sheet of parchment between the furniture and cover.

“I hope the honourable lady will not ask us to be seated,” said Mowbray, laughing, as he tried the effect of his own weight: “I fear I should never keep my countenance, if I did my seat.”

“How I wish Sheridan were here; what a scene he would make of it!”

“Your Pittites would swear that the grate, fender, and fire-irons, should all pay the powder-tax,” said Mowbray, pointing with a shiver to the steel paraphernalia which were enveloped in lime-dust.

“There is a clearer case for surcharge; look at my lady’s second footman,” said Mr. De la Bere, with a smile, as he lifted up one of that almost extinct species of “footmen,” which, in the good old days of muffins, crumpets, and hot-buttered toast, generally stood in, or before the fender at breakfast or tea. “But, hush! some one approaches; we have seen the sun, now for the moon.”

The door opened slowly, and, from rays of light which caught Mowbray’s eyes, he began to think his friend was right; but, instead of the cold, chaste planet, it proved to be a maiden with cap and flowing curls of red hair who approached with a candle and matches to light the fire, and a wash-leather to restore the steel (including the footman) to its brilliancy. This had scarcely been done, and while a few straggling wreaths of smoke were winding their way through the black knobs of

coal and double sets of bars, when the sun-fire footman opened the door, and in marched his honourable mistress.

Mrs. Somerset, as she called herself, had once been a pretty little plump girl. She had now few remains of beauty, excepting a pair of black eyes, which, at least, retained their former fire. She was decked, bedizened, over and under dressed, and outshone the herald of the morning as she entered, bobbing a most gracious courtesy to her patrician visitors.

“ I hope, madam, you will forgive the boldness of our intrusion,” said De la Bere, taking the word as soon as he and Sir Melton had gracefully returned the bob.

“ I fear that our early visit has deranged your morning pursuits!” added Mowbray, in his most fascinating tone.

Oh, dear! gentlemen, la! not at all; you are w-ery welcome!” replied the lady, with a smile which acknowledged her entire admiration of the younger visitor. “ The more servants, the worse one’s waited on, says I: I’m wery sorry you was kept. Oh, la! what a bad fire; but, pray, do be seated.”

As this invitation to take a chair was given, Mowbray's eye caught that of his friend, and both might have been detected in a smile, had not the lady's excessive politeness led her to seek the chairs herself. This, of course, was prevented by the gentlemen; and, the three being placed in a triangle before the incipient fire, the friends waited the lady's example to be seated.

Crack! crack! crack! louder than the crackling of the fire-wood, resounded from the chairs as the trio took their seats; the bachelors bit their tongues, but did not laugh.

"La! there now; that hussy, Celestina, has forgot to take them *kivvers* off!" cried the hostess, as she bounced up like a parched pea, while sparks more vivid than any in the grate, flashed from her eyes.

"Allow me, ma'am, to ring the bell," said Mowbray, interrupting the lady's intentions, and anxious to restore equanimity of temper.

"You are very good, sir. Oh, la! not them, sir; them are false: the bell is in the corner!"

Mowbray relinquished the bell-pulls *en papillote* in time to prevent their downfall; and, with a thousand apologies for his stupidity, he put his hand on a brass handle like an S, and gave the necessary summons.

“What a beautiful garden you have!” remarked Mr. De la Bere, to fill up the pause until they could resume their seats.

“I’m very glad you think so,” said the lady, pleased and flattered by the commendation. “Fitz-Willum!” addressing the sun-fire footman, “take them chair-*kivvers* off; and, Fitz-Willum — la, you stupid!” Here the lady checked her tongue; and, while a double glow of red was on her cheeks, she went up to the man in livery and whispered something in his ear; the fellow blushed as bright as his own breeches, and cast a look of agony on the gold tags, from which he had also forgotten to remove the *kivvers*. With an effort to compose her brow, she then rejoined her visitors, who had sauntered towards the windows, and pretended neither to see nor hear what had passed. “Vell, I’m glad

you think it pretty, sir," she continued, " for I'm sure it ought to be. I hate the *menagerie* of a large establishment, as my poor husband used to say ; and I keep one gardener all round the year, and two helpers three times a-week in the summer."

" Indeed, madam ! no wonder your grounds are in such perfection : I should think their beauty must repay the troubles of your *menage-erie*," said Mowbray, who could not resist the temptation of paying the compliment.

" The *kivvers hare hoff*, ma'am."

" Wery well, Fitz-Willum. I can't abide a vulgar name in my establishment," said the lady, as she led the way to the chairs, whose gorgeous glories stood revealed. " Oh, la ! I think ' Willum ' such a shocking name, that I insisted on ' my Villum ' having a little one before his own, and gave him ' Fitz.' My poor husband used to think much of the ' Des ' and the ' Las,' and suchlike. What a nice name they make of yours, Mr. *Bear* ; and as to Sir *Melting dee Mobree* — oh, la !

I never heard nothing so sweet! Names is a passion with me; and there's nothing like the ' Fitzes,' and the ' Des,' and the ' Las.'"

" I have remarked, madam, you are partial to the ' Las,'" Mr. De la Bere was on the point of saying, in revenge for the levelling attack upon his Christian and surname; but he wisely changed his intentions, and complimented the lady's good taste.

" *But Willum is so wery vulgar; isn't it, now?*" continued the fine lady, who could not refrain from returning to her passion.

" Decidedly so," answered Mr. De la Bere, who was anxious to open the campaign by propitiating the enemy. " I should be sorry to differ from a lady of such discernment; and, doubtless, I ought to blush when I confess that it has been a favourite in my family for ages."

" Oh, la! how wery odd! and with a ' De' and a ' La' before your name!"

" Yes, madam, we have borne it from the days of William the Conqueror."

" La! you don't say so! I never heard of that gentleman; pray, who was he?"

“ A mere prize-fighter in former days ; but, in his time, I can assure you, as popular as ‘ Big Ben ’ or ‘ Mendoza ’ of our times. Like them he had princes and dukes for companions, and half the nobility in Normandy.”

“ Vel, I declare one hears of nothing now but them fighting men. La ! I wonder how the Prince of Vales, and the Duke of York, and suchlike, can countenance such vulgar creatures !”

“ As a lady, madam, you must allow how powerful is passion ; even my friend and school-fellow, Tom Somerset ——”

“ Do you mean my late husband, the Right Hon. Thomas Somerset ?” asked the lady, interrupting Mr. De la Bere, with some show of surprise and anger.

“ Yes, the very same : I once knew him well ; and he, you must remember, was attached to the art of self-defence. But, with permission, we will change the subject to the purpose of our visit.”

“ You really knew my husband ?” asked the lady, with a look which bordered on suspicion.

“ Intimately, at one time ; but I lost sight of him for years, as also did his family : he was a great traveller, was he not ? ”

“ La ! yes, we certainly travelled much before and after we settled here. My poor husband was fond of seeing the *bow-mond*, as he used to call it. ”

“ I thought so, ” continued Mr. De la Bere ; “ his own brother had heard of his death, but knew not where he was buried. May I ask, if he died in this house ? ”

“ You’re wery inquisitive, sir ! Suppose he did, and suppose he didn’t ; vot then, sir ? Death is a wery delicate subject to a *vidow* ! ”

“ Be assured, madam, that the question is not suggested by idle or impertinent curiosity. I should be most sorry to renew your feelings of regret ; but, trusting to the healing power of time, I have ventured to touch on an event in which Sir Melton de Mowbray is interested. ”

“ La ! you, Sir Melting de Mowbray ; how wery odd ! ”

“ It is true, nevertheless, madam, ” said Mowbray in reply : “ in order to complete

the title of an estate, it is important to prove the death of the late Mr. Somerset, and obtain a certificate of his burial."

"Is that all, gentlemen?" asked the would-be-gracious, though half-suspicious lady.

"It is a point of great importance," said Mr. De la Bere, evasively.

"La! then, if that's all, my poor husband died at Bath, in the year 1774; and there he lies, poor thing!"

"And the will was proved at Wells?" added Mr. De la Bere, at a venture, while the widow applied a white pocket-handkerchief to — her nose!

"Oh, la! as to Vills and Vells, I can't say nothing of them matters; all I know is, I vas his vidow, and here I am!"

"I feel greatly obliged, madam, for the information you have given. Sir Melton's solicitor is in my carriage, and probably you would not object to swear ——"

"Swear!" repeated the lady, and interrupting Mr. De la Bere's request; "La, sir! I never swears!"

Mr. De la Bere explained the innocent form of a certificate; and, thinking he could better proceed on his mission when alone, he requested Mowbray to go in person, instead of receiving the offices of Fitz-William, the sun-flower footman.

“Madam,” said Mr. De la Bere, interrupting the silence of a *tête-à-tête* by drawing his chair close to the lady’s, “I have a still greater favour to request at your hands.”

“La, sir!” exclaimed the lady, with affected prudery, as she half opened a large green fan, “how very odd! Is it for yourself?”

“Partly so, but more especially for my friend, Sir Melton: his interests are so linked with mine, that I may say I speak the wishes of both.”

“La, now! Mr. Willum De la Bear, you don’t say so?” said the widow, and ventured to look her visitor in the face, while the spread fan shielded her from a fire which gave nothing but smoke.

“Indeed, madam, I do; and knowing that ambassadors should be provided with proofs

that they hope to propitiate, I put this morocco case in my pocket, and request ——”

“ Oh, la, sir!” cried the lady, as she affected to start at the sight; and contrived to look at herself in the highly polished steel, in default of a more perfect mirror.

“ It is but a trifle,” continued Mr. De la Bere, without noticing this touch of vanity; “ but if your good taste approve the setting, I trust you will accept them in return for the favour I am about to ask.”

“ Dear! la, sir, they’re very beautiful!” exclaimed the lady, as, with the innate love of finery, she took the casket in her hands, and gazed with admiration on jewellery of some value and more gaudiness. “ They’re very beautiful!” she repeated; and then, as if some secondary scruples arose, she asked with a simper, “ and pray, Mr. De la Bere, vat is it you vants?”

“ To acknowledge in myself an old acquaintance.”

“ A vat, sir? I never seed you in my life afore!”

“ Do not be offended, madam, if I re-

mind you that Mr. Somerset had once many friends."

"Vat of that, sir? He had but one vife, and I'm his vidow; no thanks to his friends, neither!"

"I pray you be calm, madam. I came not to insult, but you have the power of conferring a most important favour. My honour, my secrecy, you may rely on; for that of Sir Melton, I can stake my life; and, to be explicit, it is most essential to prove that the late Mr. Somerset died — unmarried."

"Died vat, sir? you *howdacious*, dirty-mouthed willain!" exclaimed the lady, as her wrath boiled over in the language of her earlier days, and she upset one of her company chairs in jumping from her seat.

"I entreat you to be calm!" said Mr. De la Bere, as he picked up the chair, and left a fractured arm on the floor.

"Calm, indeed, you cruel, vicked, slander-ing brute; vy, look at this!" cried the terma-gant, as, choking with anger, she lifted the fractured limb with a flourish which made the brave De la Bere quail.

“Madam, madam, do not betray yourself; be rational, I pray you!” said the bachelor, as he placed the chair from which he had risen between himself and his threatening foe. “Be but rational, and the world need never know you are and were the pretty Miss Elizabeth Flanders.”

“I’m a widow! I be’nt a miss, and never vas a miss. Leave my house, you nasty, paltry, lying monster, and take that for your pains!”

With which words, the furious woman launched the broken arm at Mr. De la Bere’s head. Luckily for him, he dipped in time to avoid the missile; unluckily for the lady of the house, its course was arrested by a large looking-glass, which it shivered to atoms.

At this moment the door opened, and in came the astonished Mowbray, and still more astounded Mr. Plastic.

“Celestina! Fitz-Willum!” screeched the fury; “turn them out! throw them over! Villum, I say, kick them out of my house!” shouted the fine lady, with an addenda of play-house oaths, which were rather of the strongest for a lady who had declared “I never swears.”

Mr. De la Bere made one more effort to appease the tigress before the household arrived. The only answer was additional abuse, backed by the red morocco case, which skimmed through the air, like an oyster-shell destined to make ducks and drakes without end. Again the chief offender escaped, and as Mr. Plastic, with eyes and hands upraised, was in the act of saying, "Was the like ever seen in a Christian land?" the casket closed his mouth, cut open his lip, and knocked a black tooth down his throat.

"The painted Jezebel! the murderess! 'blood for blood!' as the Bible saith; I'll have the law of her!" cried Mr. Plastic, while he spluttered the blood which flowed from the wound, and looked such a demon of revenge, that Mr. De la Bere feared the lawyer was about to take the law into his own hands.

The household, alarmed by the smash of glass, the voice of their virago mistress, together with peals from the bell, which continued until the wire snapped, flocked to the drawing-room: Fitz-William, Celestina, a greasy cook,

gardener, and coachman, whose fine names we never could procure, one and all of the *menagerie* flocked in at the moment when Miss Elizabeth Flanders fell down in a fit caused by the paroxysm of passion.

It was fortunate for the intruders that the attention of this formidable host was directed from themselves. Headed by such a commander-in-chief, it is doubtful whether the affray might not have been still more disastrous.

Plastic, whose courage seemed to increase a hundredfold as the enemy fell to the ground, was with difficulty persuaded to retreat.

“The wicked Jezebel!” he repeated, as he grinned a parting look; “she shall rue this assault and battery: there never was a clearer case!”

“There never was a more unlucky one!” said Mr. De la Bere, as he picked up the casket, and put it on the table; “but it will pay for the chair and the glass.”

“She shall pay me for the tooth I have lost—the tooth which is knocked down my throat!” said Mr. Plastic, through his handkerchief, as he descended the steps.

“ I will settle that account ! ” said Mr. De la Bere.

“ He has not lost it ! ” whispered Mowbray ; and, as their eyes met, they were wicked enough to smile at the day’s adventure in spite of the lawyer’s wound.

In the end, the wound was healed by the hand of nature ; the old black tooth, which had been displaced, was repaired by a new white one ; and the assault was atoned for by a sum of money which rather exceeded the amount of damages likely to have been awarded by a jury.

Mr. De la Bere adjudged himself the author of all the mischief which had occurred, and insisted upon this mode of reparation : nay, more, the following day he sent his upholsterer to ascertain the extent of damage at the large red house with iron gates, and made him the bearer of a letter addressed to “ The Honourable Mrs. Somerset.” In this he apologised for the melancholy termination of his suit, and as the information, as far as it went, was valuable, he requested her acceptance of the baubles, which, in a moment of excitement,

she had cast aside. “ If, on more mature consideration,” he added, in conclusion, “ Mrs. Somerset should call to mind her maiden name, and think proper to confer a further obligation on one who claimed the honour of remembrance, she will have no cause to repent the favour which she can so readily bestow.”

The effect of this, and second thoughts, are not on record. This much, however, is known, that the title was, ere long, made good ; and, without further delay, the proceeds were added to the golden harvest which Sir Melton de Mowbray was gathering for the benefit of others. If, indeed, one Miss Elizabeth Flanders did aid and abet by affidavit, no such person was ever heard of at Hackney. The banquets with “ *fam-ly* plate,” and “ plates with little tablecloths,” were still given by the Honourable Mrs. Somerset, the rich widow in the large red house, whose jewellery, like her garden, seemed to fructify every year.

CHAPTER X.

AN AWKWARD MISTAKE FOR A POOR MAN, AND
FIRE ! FIRE !

“ Dreams are but interludes which fancy makes.
When monarch Reason sleeps, this mimic wakes,
Compounds a medley of disjointed things,
A court of cobblers, and a mob of kings.
Light fumes are merry, grosser fumes are sad,—
Both are the reasonable soul run mad :
And many monstrous forms in sleep we see,
That never were, nor are, nor e’er can be.
Sometimes we but rehearse a former play ;
And night restores our actions done by day.”

DRYDEN.

SOME philosophical Cocker, musing on the changes of the world, has calculated that nearly the whole property of England changes hands and owners in an incredibly short space of time. We can readily believe it. How few amongst the largest landholders are more

than nominally wealthy! the estate is dipped — dipping — going — and to-morrow will be gone! In a thousand ways the work of change and destruction is progressing, as surely as the work of industry which will supply the means of purchase. Let a man live for a time in what is called the world, let him quit it for a little, return, and look around him, how few of the world he knew at parting will he recognise! let him pass to the King's Bench, or wander in the rules of the Fleet, how many will he there recognise of those who, but a little while since, claimed to be amongst the landed aristocracy of England!

A volume — ay, and a most amusing, as well as moral volume — might be written from the recorded evidence of title-deeds.

“ A volume ! ” exclaim Messrs. Presto, Pass, and Ferret, the able conveyancers of Lincoln's Inn ; “ why, one twelvemonth's practice of our office would furnish matter for a library of sermons on the mutability of worldly property ! ”

And verily they are right. Few, excepting those who are thus professionally employed,

can conceive the extraordinary ups and downs which are brought to light through the medium of musty parchments. The rapid way in which families, and large ones too, are swept from the memory of man, seems scarcely credible. Excepting that the fiat of death to all is a certainty, it might be imagined that many, instead of dying, had been absorbed by the surrounding elements, and vanished nobody could say how, when, or where, so completely is their final destiny involved in obscurity; others, again, like the fiery Miss Flanders, are brought to light by collision of chance; but her case is nothing to the unimaginable chances, from the highest to the lowest, from the lowest to the highest positions, which are ferretted out from time to time.

A something of the former, that is, some of those gaps and gulfs of mystery which break the chain of legal evidences, had caused a delay in bringing the private estate of Sir Melton de Mowbray to the market. These, however, had been cleared away, and it was to be submitted to public auction on the following day.

Mr. De la Bere, with the kindness and forethought which guided all his actions, invited himself to dine and sleep in Vine-tree Court, for the ostensible reason of celebrating their fortunate retreat in a glass of old D'Aubigny's old port, though, in reality, to engage Mowbray on the morrow in a visit to his wooden-legged pensioners; and thus wile him away from the sound of the hammer, which would tell that his favourite estate was gone from himself to another.

"The upright judge," he said, within himself, "may pass sentence, yet shrink from seeing its execution. Melton's decision is right, but he need not be present when it is acted upon; I know he loves the dirty acres."

The carriage, with the discomfited trio, arrived in Lombard Street while these reflections were passing in the mind of the benevolent bachelor, and, having expressed his intention of sleeping in the city, Mr. Plastic prepared to descend with his bag and useless credentials.

"No, no, my dear sir!" cried Mr. De la Bere, as he stopped him on the steps; "what!

let the wounded quit their litter? Impossible! I insist upon your allowing my carriage to take you home; and if, in the way of business, you have any visit to make, pray use it as your own!"

Never was a more sanitory balm poured into the wounds of suffering martyr; the hoof had peeped out, and De la Bere's quick eye saw the vulnerable point of this black Achilles of godliness.

"My good sir," answered the lawyer, "you are too considerate; I am so unworthy of this honour: but, if you do insist, I would not anger a Christian brother by refusal!"

"Quite right, Mr. Plastic; it is enough to quarrel with the sisterhood, is it not?" asked Mr. De la Bere, with a smile which he could not control.

"The painted Jezebel! the scarlet ——"

"Hush, hush!" said Mr. De la Bere, putting his hand on the lawyer's mouth; "we must, as you say, forget and forgive. Remember it was my fault, and I gave just cause for provocation; but *we* will settle that. John,

you will attend to this gentleman's wishes, and obey his orders as my own!"

Mr. Plastic had been more angered than hurt; it is true, the inside of the lip had been cut against the decayed tooth which it ejected; but, though it bled freely for a time, it had now ceased. As to the tooth which had been knocked down his throat, a lawyer's stomach can digest any thing when he is well paid. It may, therefore, be imagined, how joyously he took possession of the grandeur placed at his command. He remembered many calls which he had to make between Lombard Street and Chancery Lane; his visits, however, were hurried. "My friend's carriage" (and, alas! for the weakness of mortal man), in some cases, "*My* carriage is waiting, and, perhaps, to save time, you could accompany me to the door!" or, with some such trap, he seduced principal or clerk to see him jump into a carriage, with the aid of two footmen to lean on.

"The devil's in the man! he is mad, or drunk!" said one and all, who saw the low,

sanctified black man, skipping about like a dancing-master. They were not far wrong: the intoxication of riches, pomp, and honours, can upset many a stronger head than that which graced the shoulders of the crafty lawyer, and make him forget himself and friends.

It is unnecessary to repeat the bachelor's fare. We have no more time for walks by moonlight; neither can we accompany them to Greenwich, its palace, pensioners, and park.

"Well, Martha, behind time? Is the fish spoiled?" said Mr. De la Bere, addressing that person, who, clothed as neatly as a Quakeress, opened the door to welcome her master and his guest.

"I hope not, sir!" replied the ancient maiden, with modest diffidence.

"Glad of that—don't forget—the soup first—one thing at a time—ready in ten minutes!"

"How now, Mr. Bowman! what is the matter, my worthy friend?" said De la Bere, as he peeped into the dining-room.

"Speak, Bowman! what has happened?"

cried Mowbray, as he also looked with wonder on the faithful clerk, who was pacing the end of the room in unwonted agitation — now stamping his foot, now clenching his fist, or striking his forehead with the open palm.

“ Matter, sir? happened, sir?” cried Bowman, who, upon the questions being repeated, brought his steps to a halt; “ I could die of anger and vexation — gladly, sir, I could do it, gladly!” and again he stamped his foot, while his fist rose with a flourish, and descended, as if it could annihilate the innocent dumb-waiter.

“ This, my worthy sir, could have said nothing to offend you!” said De la Bere, as he wheeled dummy on one side, and vainly hoped to change Bowman’s frown to a smile.

“ Come, Bowman,” added Mowbray, “ let us hear the worst: you shall not die in my cause, if I can help it; I have been too well schooled to fear the truth. Speak! my estate is sold for half its value; or, perhaps, not sold at all?”

“ Sold, sir!” cried Bowman, raising his hand as if he were wielding the hammer of a

blacksmith. "Had I been by, I think I should have knocked down the bidder, and choked him with his fifty thousand pounds."

"Fifty thousand! why, Bowman, that is more than I expected, now that land is so depreciated. I consider that the estate is well sold."

"Sold, sir!" echoed Bowman once more. "It is not sold at all; and you have bought a manor-house, with woods, preserves, tenants, ducks, decoys, and I know not how many acres, in Yorkshire!"

"I?—I have bought?" echoed Mowbray, in his turn.

"Bought!" echoed De la Bere, at the same moment, "ducks and tenants?"

"Yes, sir, it is a fact," answered Bowman. "And without entering upon the auctioneer's flowery description," he continued, "the genteel blockhead whom you employed to run up the biddings on your estate, bid, by mistake, for a property in Yorkshire, which was knocked down to your agent for fifty thousand pounds, while the hubbub and confusion which ensued ruined the sale of your own estate."

Mowbray was struck dumb, while Mr. De la Bere, with a fervent “zounds!” sympathised with Bowman’s feelings of vexation. At this moment, Martha asked if she should serve the dinner.

“Yes, Martha, we need it more than ever. And Melton, my dear boy, cheer thee up; we’ll drink confusion to the manor-house, and leave me to get you out of it.”

“I am no longer Fortune’s favourite, that is clear,” said Mowbray with a sigh, as he presently took his chair.

“None can help that, my dear Melton; but the fickle jade has no right to step out of the common course, and make a man buy when he wants to sell; and, as sure as my name is William,—‘*wulgar*’ though it be,—she shan’t do so this time.”

Long ere Martha had entered with the bed candles, Mr. De la Bere had satisfied Mowbray that, having given no authority to bid for the estate in Yorkshire, he could not be held responsible as purchaser; and that, when the blunderer was found to be a man of straw, he would, probably, be freed from his bargain.

Nay more; vexatious as the incident was, as their spirits gladdened with the taste of D'Aubigny's port, there was many a laugh at Bowman's irresistibly comic description of the penniless clerk, who, for his patrician air, had been selected as a proper puffer; and who, said Bowman, "marched into the room as proud and as puffed as a drum-major, and fired his blank cartridge with an air which deceived even the experienced knight of the hammer."

When Mowbray, in the heyday and promise of life, exchanged the gay haunts of fashion for the stifled atmosphere of Vine-tree Court, the reader's attention was called to a sketch of his city residence.

Memory, like a barrister, needs a refresher every now and then; and as the description was slight, and we fear but feeble withal, it may be well to repeat, that the windows of his bedroom opened upon some leads which formed the flat roof of the cashier's office,; beyond, was the old churchyard, which had been converted to a garden, bounded on two sides by crumbling monumental walls, on the third by lofty warehouses (mostly of wood), and at-

tached to the rear of houses which formed the street parallel with Lombard Street.

It was to this apartment that Mowbray had retired for the night ; and, dearly as he loved the society of De la Bere, he was not sorry to pay the last attentions of an anxious host, say “ good night,” and be alone. His heart was full, and he longed to commune with his thoughts.

Having secured the door, he felt at once as if the fetters of the mind had been removed, and he yielded, without reserve, to that sacred charm which shrouds the chamber dedicated to night and solitude. Yes, if it be not pleasure, it is a relief, to ponder, unobserved by human eye, on the chances, changes, and trials, of our fleeting life.

Like a passing panorama, the scenes and occurrences of the last few days flitted in review ; and as he imaged the patrician-looking clerk, in the act of bidding for an estate in Yorkshire, instead of aiding to sell one in Staffordshire, he could not refrain from a smile at the absurdity of the mistake. But the smile was followed by a sigh, as it shewed

the obstinate perverseness of Fortune's frolics ; and he said aloud, " Alas ! alas ! strive as I may, I am doomed to disappointment ! "

And again, with that thought, the vision of Lady Helen rose to view. He saw her as but two nights since, leaning on the arm of the Duke of Dublin ; he saw the words of a paragraph which had met his eye that very day, and which reported his grace to be a favoured suitor. Casual and commonplace as were the words, they glared upon his recollection as if they were written in imperishable light,—they sounded in his ears as if a demon spoke them with the breath of fire : again he stood at the corner of the square,—Lady Blankisle's carriage dashed along,—and like Eurydice, hurried from the grasp of him whose voice had won her, the Lady Helen turned to gaze, and in an instant was lost, and seen no more. " And is she changed ? and will she wed ? " he asked himself in utter agony ; and as he imaged her standing at the altar of God, and pledging her faith *to another*, he felt as if his heart were bursting. A suffocating fulness

choked his breath, — a dimness of vision, of intellect, fell upon the swimming brain ; he reeled like a drunken man, then rallied, with an effort of expiring reason, and rushed to the door which led to the open air.

The cool and silent freshness of the midnight hour fell upon his brow like dew upon the fevered earth : it soothed, it calmed, and revived, the drooping senses, which, like flowers steeped in the shadows of evening, imbibed the holy balm, and gradually regained their strength.

“ Perish the selfish thought ! ” he said, as he once more found the powers of utterance. “ And aid me, Heaven ! to wish her happy — blessed above her fellows in this dreary world ; and may she, ” — he added slowly, but solemnly, as he raised his clasped hands above his head — “ may she learn to forget one who has nought but poverty to offer, and misery wherewith to blast her destiny. This shall not be ! — the very thought *shall* perish ! — would that my hour of self-willed banishment were come ! Yes, Helen, brightest, purest, as thou art, my

presence shall not cross thy path—my shadow shall not darken, my breath shall never dim, the jewel I may not win and wear as *mine*.”

As Mowbray uttered these prayers and resolutions, he looked intently on the moon, as if its gentle beauty were kindred with the spirit of her on whom he had so often gazed, and said within his heart,—“ Yes, thou alone art to me the world of the blessed, and prized, like the orb of night, above the millions which glitter around thee.” But those thoughts were framed in bright and happy hours, and now, as once again they rose to mind, a dark cloud obscured the rays of night. “ ’Tis well!” he said, “ such thoughts should pass;” and, with a sigh, he turned his eyes from heaven to the garden beneath his feet—to the spot long dedicated to the rites of death, and in which his hand had supplied the place of the poor old sexton. Many and many an hour he had sought relief for the head, by the toil of the body,—he had tilled the earth, planted his cuttings, and sown such seeds as he might hope to rear: the soil, enriched with the clay

of man, had repaid his labours, and given a something to interest, and almost love.

As he looked on the sexton's grave — its only monument, the flowers which sprang above it, — and thought how soon the garden, left to itself, would again become a wilderness — how quickly the mouldering shed be turned to dust — the very spade, the mattock, and the shovel, perish and decay like those whose cold dwelling they had so oft prepared, — he felt something like sorrow and regret at leaving an abode which he had shuddered to approach, which had borne witness to trials and slavery by day, to agonising sorrows by night, and all the bitter changes which had marked his altered course. To his surprise, he perceived that his heart, unknown to himself, had found something to cling to, something round which to twine its feeble shoots, and from which it could not be torn away without a pang. “And must it,” he asked himself, “be ever thus? Do our affections never die till the heart is frozen by the hand of death? May we not live, yet let our

feelings wither? Well—well—it matters little, when I see how quickly all is doomed to change and pass away.”

The night itself had changed, as if in accordance with these dark and gloomy meditations; the moon, as when last he looked upon Lady Helen, had become obscured, as if to darken even the thoughts which her beams had wakened: a sense of exhaustion warned him of to-morrow's duties, and he sought for renewal of strength in the blessing of repose.

Though the body sleep, the mind is ever busy; and strange are its gambols, when let loose for the night, and Queen Mab takes fancy's team in hand. Mowbray dreamt; and one while he was king of the north,—Old England was divided, and Lady Helen was his queen, and the manor-house became a palace: this kingdom perished—how, or when, he knew not: he stood with De la Bere in the oak parlour of the large red house, and looked on the widow Somerset's attack on Lawyer Plastic. “We'll fight it out, you black-toothed black-guard!” shouted the angry heroine. Anon, beside the cedar-trees, was a twenty-four feet

square stage, and the lawyer and the lady set to. Blood royal and nobles (as they then were wont) sat around to bet and praise; “bravos!” rent the air. “By all that’s glorious,” shouted the Prince of Wales, “but that was a Mendoza!—Two hundred to one on the limb of the law!”

“Done, George!” cried one of his brothers. “Pounds, or guineas?”

“If that’s not a *Somerset*, I never saw one,” cried some wit of the day, as the widow threw the lawyer clean off his legs, and he fell senseless on his back. The second stooped to raise his man, and, suddenly assuming the form of the devil, flew away with his victim amidst deafening shouts of applause, and suffocating clouds of smoke and sulphur.

“A change came o’er the spirit of his dream.” The morning paper was presented for perusal; he read, amidst descriptive glories,—“Lady Helen Fawndove was united to his Grace the Duke of Dublin.” He strove to look away, but could not: he said to himself, “It is but a dream,” and struggled to awake; but it might not be. False or true, dreaming or

waking, his eyes were riveted to the fatal words; and, as he gazed, the letters grew in size: they changed from black on white, to white on black, and still they grew in width, and depth, in height, and length. Anon, the white was changed to light, which shone like moonbeams through a sky of darkness. Again the light was changed to flame, the flame to bars of liquid fire still clinging to the mould of letters; and still they grew in size every way; and still his fixed, involuntary gaze, was riveted upon them. Nearer, and nearer, their bloated form approached—the eye-balls reddened with the scorching heat—the briny, scalding tears, hissed and bubbled as they started at the dazzling light, and ploughed their furrows on the cheek with points of fire; nearer and nearer still—the eyelids crack—the lashes flame—vision fails—the sightless orbs are touched by a consuming fire—and, in the fancied torture of that moment, Mowbray awoke.

“It was but a dream,” he again repeated, pressing his hands against his smarting eyelids; and, as he struggled to collect his

thoughts, he felt the scalding tears upon his cheek. That, at least, was not a dream ; he started from his bed,—the darkness of his chamber was passing to a dull and lurid light—faint wreaths of yellow smoke mingled with the smell of fire—the crackling of burning timbers broke upon his ear ; and as these living evidences quickened his awakened senses, “ This is reality ! ” he exclaimed, and rushed to the half-closed door which opened to the leads.

The truth was soon apparent : over the range of warehouses which faced his windows, hung a dense, heavy mass of smoke, which reddened to an angry blush as the flames leaped up and strove to pierce it with their forked tongues ; from top to bottom the windows were illuminated with a murky, fitful glare ; and, ere Mowbray was able to awaken his friend, De la Bere, the flames rushed forth with overpowering force ; and, bursting the roof with the voice of thunder, the clouds were lost, and brightness, more vivid than that of day, flashed and reigned around.

With the quickness of lightning, Mow-

bray proclaimed the threatened danger ; calm and collected, he despatched messengers for aid, others to awake those who slumbered in fancied security ; the watchmen sprang their rattles ; bells and knockers were heard above the din of voices ; the heavy engines, lined with firemen, and guided by their flaring torches, tore like war-cars along the trembling granite. Shrieks, yells, riot, and confusion, had broken upon the silence of the midnight hour ; a canopy of gorgeous red was spread amidst the darkness of night, and floated in the vault of heaven above the dazzling and destroying element. Having taken the first measures necessary, Mowbray said, “ And now, De la Bere, my best and bravest friend, the lives of our fellow-creatures being saved, aid me to save that which is dearer to me than my life—the means of freedom from the accursed yoke—the slavish, debasing thralldom of debt. Quick ! collect these papers, vouchers, and notes, all prepared for a final dividend on the morrow. The keys, Bowman ! give me the keys of the iron-room ; I will

descend and prepare the way for these, the price of liberty !”

“ Halt, sir ! for Heaven’s sake, halt ! I implore you, do not venture to the strong room ; the flames and burning flakes are pouring in showers on the skylight of the cashier’s office : even here they may be safe, to venture there is fraught with death !”

“ I had rather die, than risk the chance of losing the gathered property of others. The keys, Bowman ! give me the keys !”

“ Do not command me ; on my knees I ask you not !” entreated Bowman, with a look of agony.

“ Be ruled, be rational, and heed not this accursed Mammon !” cried De la Bere, moved by Bowman’s fears, and joining in his prayer.

“ It is not for myself, for it will pass and leave me penniless ; but the stake is liberty, and my foolish, fatal hurry, to be free on the morrow, neglected the usual caution of the night : delay is madness !” cried Mowbray. And, as he tore the keys from the grasp of the reluctant Bowman, he added, “ If there

be danger, none shall follow my steps; I will return for that which I cannot carry with me."

"That shall not be!" cried De la Bere, snatching up a heap of documents; "if there be danger, I will share it!"

"Give the word, and I will follow!" added Bowman, as he caught the spirit of enthusiasm, and saw it was in vain to turn Mowbray from his intention.

Mowbray flew through the rooms and passages which led to the cashier's office; Bowman's report and fears were not without foundation; large flakes of fire, pieces of ignited fir, were whirled aloft by the ascending flames, and fell in showers on the skylight; at times immense volumes of fire and smoke were carried by the rising wind, and seemed as if they were about to be poured upon the roof beneath which he stood. Dauntless and determined for himself, with energies doubled in behalf of those who shared his danger, he seized the rings which raised the trapdoors immediately over the descent to the iron room; flapping them back, right and left,

he sprang down the wooden staircase, and, with the presence of mind on which his hopes—or, it might be, life depended, he applied the keys, touched the secret springs, gave the half or quarter turn, and opened, first a ponderous door of oak cased and riveted with iron, and then a second, framed and panelled, entirely in wrought and massive iron.

To stow away the assets, books, and documents, which each had brought, was an easy task; their labours were repeated, and every moment rendered the task more perilous. The premises which had first taken fire, belonged to a wholesale chemist; adjoining, was a gunmaker's, who, in the rear of his house, was in the habit of keeping his store of gunpowder. Already, ether, or other chemical preparations, had exploded from time to time, doubling the showers of burning wood, pieces of which fell through the skylight, and continued burning in the office.

“For Heaven's sake, risk it no longer!” exclaimed Bowman; who, like the firemen, laboured in dread of some fearful explosion of powder, and shuddered lest his dear young

master should be buried alive by burning ruins.

“ Be advised, my dearest Melton,” added Mr. De la Bere; “ you may perish ere we return with what remains.”

“ You shall venture here no more; you shall not stay; I alone will complete the task,” said Mowbray, as he left the entrance of the strong room, and sprang up the stairs.

“ No, no! to the last we’ll share the peril!” said De la Bere, as he read the fixed determination of Mowbray’s countenance: “ stay here, prepare to close the doors, be ready to receive our freight, we will return in an instant!”

That instant seemed an age, as Mowbray once more descended to the subterranean room, once the burial-ground of mortal man. As he stood at the arched doorway, listening for a coming footstep, and watching the falling fire, the rolling clouds of ruddy smoke which lowered on the skylight over head, he thought of the purpose for which the ground had once been used; he thought, too, of the devoted city of Torre del Greco, which had lately

perished in the eruption of Vesuvius, and felt that, in another instant, such might be his fate. While thus left to the pause of suspended action, the trial was doubly severe: the horrors of such a death, of being buried alive by the burning ashes, flashed across his imagination. Though fevered by his late exertions, a chilled and shuddering thrill passed from head to foot, and cold drops of perspiration stood upon his brow; he looked upon the means of ascent, and, for a moment, contemplated flight: it was but a moment—his firmness returned; again he busied himself in preparing to close the springs and locks.

Once more he turned to listen; he caught the voice of Mr. De la Bere hastening Bowman in his course; he heard their coming steps; when the earth, the air, the solid arch beneath which he stood, trembled with some dread explosion; a sudden darkness succeeded to a momentary glare of oppressive light, and again this was pierced by the descent of falling beams and flakes of burning wood, which shivered the skylight to a thousand atoms, and fell in dread confusion at his feet.

Mowbray had instinctively retreated to the depths of the subterranean room, now illuminated by the shower of fire which had fallen on the stairs and entrance; heedless, for the moment, of all but the friends whose approach he had heard, he ascended in haste, and answered to the voices which called upon his name.

“Thank God, you are safe!” said De la Bere, with fervency, as he pressed Mowbray to his heart.

“A thousand, thousand thanks, for this blessed mercy!” cried Bowman, as, with the simplicity of a child, he seized a hand and pressed it to his lips.

“Come, Melton, come! you have done enough for others, now save yourself,” said De la Bere, as he took Mowbray by the arm, and strove to lead him away, while softened by the joy of mutual escape.

“The beginning, without an end, will avail but little,” answered Mowbray, as this appeal recalled him to his duties; “the doors must yet be closed; and, oh! this not secured!” he exclaimed, as he snatched from Bowman’s

hand a sealed packet of exchequer bills, which, for greater security, had, till the previous day, been lodged in the Bank of England. "Rest here till I return; I will call, if aid be wanting; I alone will fulfil the task."

Ere Bowman could reply, he relieved him of his packet, and was about to attempt the same with De la Bere, when he said,—

"Go to—go to—you mad, determined boy; we part not while we live! Quick, quick! or a madman's bravery will fail!" And, pleased with sharing in the determination of him for whom alone he feared, he smiled in the midst of danger, and added, "Ere you had rifled half my pockets, the bank would have been in flames!"

"As the stairs are now?" cried Mowbray, pointing down the descent to the strong room. "But I can pass; give me your coat," he added, as he hoped to spare the hazard of his friend, and saw there was not a moment left for emptying pockets by force or persuasion.

"Not leave a coat to my back? Fie, Melton! thus I thwart you!" and, ere the sentence was finished, De la Bere had rushed

through the ascending flame and smoke; the burning stairs crackled with his weight, but he stood in safety in the massive archway.

Mowbray followed, Bowman looked aghast; and, clenching his hands, stood the figure of despair.

“Take it now,” said De la Bere, handing the coat with its host of monied pockets; “place this in safety, while I clear the burning wood from the doorway. Where are the keys?”

“In the lock — all’s ready!”

“By Heavens, I cannot move it!” cried Mowbray, who, having quickly returned from the deep recesses of the vault, was now all but breathless with the effort to close the solid iron door, which, in his eagerness, he had probably opened wider than usual.

At this moment a second explosion took place, followed by a second shower of burning fragments. De la Bere sprang to his aid; their united power succeeded; the door hoarsely creaked upon its hinges; the springs answered to a touch; the locks to the key; they advanced to the outer door, cleared away

the larger fragments, and, jamming the charred wood to powder, closed within its socket, and *the price of liberty was secured!*

Brief was the space of time which this occupied in action; Bowman, who had been awakened from the torpor of silent agony by a blow from some falling timber, now stood prepared to aid the ascent of those he had given up for lost. The smoke had increased, and the flames had gained upon the steps; wrapping up a large cloak which he had used in conveying the books and papers, he threw it to Mr. De la Bere, whose fine cambric was likely to suffer; and then, with a long pike (seized from his collection), he looked for the opportunity of supplying a banister. The thought was well-timed; De la Bere made the first attempt to run the red gauntlet; the half-burnt stairs crumbled beneath his weight, and, but for the pike at which he caught (to the eminent peril of pulling Bowman and his friendly weapon into the thick of the fire), he would probably have fallen back ere Mowbray rendered his assistance.

Mowbray, cheered with seeing his friend

in safety, threw up the keys, which whizzed like a chain-shot past Bowman's head; and, springing like a stag, cleared the faithless steps and reached the top, blackened, singed, and scathed, but safe, and flushed with victory.

Once more the trapdoors were flapped down, the flames were smothered, a hose from an engine was shortly introduced through a window, and effectually checked the fire which had threatened to destroy the office, bank, and domicile, of the once far-famed Messrs. D'Aubigny and Co.

CHAPTER XI.

FAREWELL TO THE CITY—THE LAWYER'S BILL
AT LENGTH.

“ For lawyers, lest Bear, defendant,
And plaintiff, Dog, should make an end on't,
Do stave, and tail, with writs of error,
Reverse of judgment, and demurrer,
To let them breathe awhile, and then
Cry whoop ! and set 'em on agen ;
Until, with subtle cobweb-cheats,
They're caught in knotted law, like nets,
In which, when once they are imbrangled,
The more they stir the more they're tangled ;
And while their purses can dispute,
There's no end of th' immortal suit.”

HUDIBRAS.

WHO says that “ life is like a tale that is told,”
says wrong. Life is like a novel, which comes
to an end ere we know where we are ; ere half
is told that we had to tell ; ere half is done
that we had to do ; while yet our thoughts are
winging onwards, in heedless flight, our end

approaches : “ Finis,” that awful and mysterious word, stares us in the face, and hints that our page must soon be closed.

Adieu, then, to Vine-tree Court! — the bills are up “ for sale!” Let silence revel and swallow up the strange and stirring scenes which were intended to be told. Mr. De la Bere has left for his triennial visit to the wilds of Ireland; a final dividend has been declared and made—every man has received to his uttermost; and men, like Gabble, the soulless barrister, have felt the fulness of their littleness. When Mowbray, freed, as it were, from an avalanche which had fallen on his head, rose with the proud fulfilment of honourable intentions, and looked *on* such with silent, cold, ineffable contempt; oh! what an hour of blessed victory was that! how the heart fluttered with joy as he saw the mean insects shrink within themselves, and cringe beneath his glance of fire; oh! how his spirit bounded, as he scorned their tardy thanks, and spurned aside the proffered hand! Was this revenge? was it deep, unhallowed, black revenge, to glut upon the moments for which he had

looked with ardent longings? Be it so! Let those who have not known misfortune—who have neither been trampled on, insulted, robbed, abused—let them condemn. They whose galled and bleeding necks have been bowed by the shackles of debt; they who have blotted out the word, and risen, like a captive freed from his fetters—they will forgive the triumphal bitterness of Mowbray's vengeance. Let others, blessed and happy in this world of trial, pause ere they condemn. If in a heart fraught with feelings, noble, great, and good, the blackened spirit of revenge had found a spot to dwell in, who planted the deadly seed? Who first prepared the soil, and curdled the pure and ruddy pulse, till it grew dark, corrupt, and fitting for the thoughts it nourished? Who did this, but she who bore him? Who, but the erring, gifted mother, who branded herself with shame, and, while she clasped her lovely infant to her bosom, and kissed her last farewell, blasted the peace of innocence, and left the foul brand of shame upon his brow? Such had been the inheritance, and such the fruits bequeathed by the once bright

and noble-minded Julia Saladin, when, as Lady De Mowbray, she perished in the worst of deaths—the death of sin.

But there were better, happier feelings, than those of hatred and revenge: these were the exceptions; for many, very many strangers, until the day of trial, had evinced kindness, forbearance, and generous sympathy, which did honour to the human heart. To repay such their due—to prove that their confidence had not been misplaced—to acknowledge the everlasting debt of gratitude—to speak the fulness of his feelings with the grasp of warmth, the eloquence of silent tears; oh! this, indeed, was a blessed—a holy victory!

Mowbray, like the racer urged and spurred, had thought of nothing but the course he ran; he was neither sensible of the efforts he was making, nor the forces he was expending; but, when the goal was won—when the signs of bondage were removed, and the curb-chain taken from his lips—when he was cast loose upon the wide world, he felt that his health, his nerves, his strength, had been unwisely tried; his knees trembled, exhaustion dragged

his spirits to the earth, and the fever of lassitude succeeded to that of action. Still, however, he fought against the mastery of sickness as he had against misfortune; he combated the inroads of the drooping mind, by reflecting there was yet another course to run—one other sacrifice to make: he must purchase his commission, and leave his country. That were nothing: he must leave for ever the Lady Helen.

The selfish haste which many of the principal creditors had urged, strengthened, as it was, by Mowbray's wish to be free, had caused a ruinous sacrifice, both in the sale of property and collection of debts due to the house; but the means of obtaining a commission, an annual income sufficient for the necessities of a junior officer, and wherewithal to discharge the long-expected bill of the black Mr. Plastic, was all he desired; and for this, the balance he had in hand promised to be more than ample. The premises in Lombard Street had been assigned to Mr. Bettison as part of his claims, with the understanding, of course, that if the sale proved more than sufficient to cover his demands, the

surplus was to be returned. Little, however, was to be expected from that quarter—the necessities, or, rather, the luxuries, of the Honourable Mrs. Bettison, and her honourable brood of boys and girls, were crying and urgent; so, at least, it was said: and the premises must be sold for what they would fetch, provided always, that that was enough to cover the uttermost farthing of the ex-partner's claims.

Such, thanks to the apparition of that great author "Finis," was the position of affairs to which we have been unexpectedly called; at a time, too, when poor Mowbray either wandered like an apparition through the dark and deserted offices which, for centuries, had teemed with the bustle of business, passed from thence to the room in which his father had breathed his last, or mused for hours in the churchyard garden, as he looked once more, it might be, for the last time, on the flower-beds which the sexton's taste had bordered with human bones.

This inaction seemed worse than the sleep of death. Bowman, faithful and attached through every change, watched in silence,

wishing, yet fearing, to offer his house, his home, and means, to the son of him who had been his patron and master.

Though this good and upright man, had ill-starred ambition guided his views, might long have been a partner in the house, he never lost sight of the fact that he had been but a clerk, and never forgot that all-but-exploded deference and distinction which formerly was wont to mark the gradations in society.

Affection and anxiety, however, prevailed at length over his scruples; and, as he trembled at the sad and deathly sickness which appeared to be gaining on him whose occupation was gone, he opened the subject, and tried to shroud the delicacy of his feelings in his wonted quaintness of expression.

“There be little good in halting here, my kind and honoured commander,” said Bowman, as he saluted Sir Melton, and gently pressing his arm, roused him from his meditations on the sexton’s grave. “When the battle’s fought, and the dead are buried, we do no good by lingering on the field of death.”

“None, Bowman,” replied Mowbray, with

a kind but melancholy smile; “you are right: hatred and malice can add no further wound, nor love awake their blessed slumbers.”

“I wish, Sir Melton, I could persuade you to quit these dreary and deserted scenes: the war is over—a castle without a garrison—and——”

“The ammunition spent.”

“Even so, Sir Melton; but you have fought the good fight, and honourably surrendered.”

“Not at the Court of Bankruptcy: thank Heaven for that!” added Mowbray, with a sudden burst of energy.

“Amen! with all my heart,” added Bowman; and continued—“But you have honourably surrendered to the fate of Fortune’s war—it is time to evacuate—it were wise to retreat; and if a peaceful home—if respect, devotion, and all my means afford, can cheer your spirits, come, I beseech you, come to my humble but honest welcome, and make your faithful follower happy by honouring his roof.”

Mowbray, overcome by this generous ap-

peal, grasped Bowman by the hand; his gratitude and thanks beamed from the swelling eye.

“And wherefore not?” cried Bowman. “Do I not owe all I possess to your kind and noble father?—were not all things his?—are they not yours? Take them—share them as you will. What was your honoured father’s dying wish? Did I not swear that I would never desert you?”

“No, Bowman, it may not be; you forget I am no beggar yet,” answered Mowbray, whose proud and indomitable spirit of independence amounted almost to a fault, and gave his denial the character of harshness, if not of ingratitude.

“Forgive me, Sir Melton,” said Bowman, driven at once from the warmth of earnest entreaty to the tone of respect; “if, impelled by the sense of gratitude to your good father, I have offended by presuming to——”

“No, no, Bowman, my kind, my true and faithful friend,” said Mowbray, taking his hand between his own; “you wrong my notions of refusal. In brighter days, I was never proud

but with the proud; and now, humbled to the dust as I have been, it is not likely I should be offended without a cause, or insensible to the kindness of the lowliest on earth—least of all, to offers made by one tried and valued as yourself.”

“ Then, wherefore not accept them ? ”

“ It may not be : bear with my proud spirit, my love of independence, which I cannot conquer while placed above that dark debasing trial—want ; and God grant I may never fall so low as to be destitute ! ”

“ May Heaven prevent the very thought ! ” ejaculated Bowman, from the bottom of his heart.

“ But if my strength should fail—and I am not what I was, I feel a sinking, a tremor. But this is fancy, a weakness of the mind, *and it shall not be*,” said Mowbray, drawing up his fine figure, and standing with the firmness and elasticity of former days. The effort passed like the bowstring slackened—a faintness and misgiving relaxed the muscles, and he added, “ But if—if it should be so ordained—if sickness triumph——”

“ Then, long ere then, you shall share my home, and all I have.”

“ I will, Bowman. But there is a prior claim—one who has forgiven and borne all my proud spirit, as you must know,—the noble, generous De la Bere, he——”

“ Halt, sir!” said Bowman, interrupting Sir Melton in his anxiety to be first in the race of goodness. “ Noble and generous he is, but his claims are secondary: let my debt be proved the first—a debt due to yourself; for all I have I owed to your lamented father, and now it is yours.”

“ Well, well,” said Sir Melton, anxious to turn the theme without paining the kind-hearted suitor; “ should that sad day arrive, I see I must surrender at discretion to two, who, in the language of truth, and not of the world, are the only friends I have. And now, Bowman, oblige me once more by going to Mr. Plastic, and demanding his bill: tell him I expect my commission,—that this day I change my quarters,—that all accounts are settled but his——”

“ And that the bills ‘ for sale ’ are posted

on your last stronghold. And mark me, Sir Melton, he will answer to that spur; and I pray that his oily-tongued sanctity has not deceived you. And you really leave these dreary premises to-day?"

"Even so, and you will smile at my choice, which, compared with the neatness of your country box, is comfortless. But I am not like the bold knight, who, says the ballad,

"Stately he stalked east, and stately he stalked west."

The former, alas! I have never done, — the latter I may never do again: I would avoid them both, and live between the two, until I join my regiment."

"And tell me, Sir Melton, where?"

"Even without these accursed city walls," said Mowbray, with a fervent imprecation; and then, changing to a shadow of the playful humour of other days, he added, — "I have, you will see, imbibed the warlike spirit which, in my boyhood, you endeavoured to infuse: the tone of your thoughts has, in silence, in-

vested my imagination; in fancy I have seen that the city walls had reared their gloomy boundary around me; I have felt that they held me prisoner: for three years I have been as one besieged; and the sound of its many gates, though now applied to streets, grated on my ears as if they said, ‘So far shalt thou go, and no further.’ Not even a ‘bishop,’ or ‘St. John’ himself, prefixed, could break the charm; they sounded as harshly as ‘Cripple-gate,’—as sadly as the ill-omened name of ‘Newgate’ itself.”

“Halt there, Sir Melton! that gate is too sad to joke with; we’ll pass it, if you please,” said Bowman, positively grinning at his maiden efforts at a pun.

“I mean to pass them all,” said Mowbray, as he faintly attempted to laugh, “even the blood-stained Temple Bar; and, wishing to avoid the west, I have taken apartments in the second court on the left hand, No. ——”

“Sir Melton de Mowbray! what! halted there, in Palsgrave Place!” exclaimed Bowman, shocked, or rather pained, at the idea

of such humble quarters for the young and high-bred baronet,—one lapped in luxury, and once the heir to thousands.

“ Yes, Bowman, and no bad quarters for a future soldier. Once without these city walls, I shall breathe more freely, and sleep more soundly ; I care not where I lie : besides, like Mahommed, I seek to rest between two elements.”

“ Mahommed,” answered Bowman (for he was at home in the reading), “ was a better general than saint, and deserved a safer tomb than the changing winds, or the shifting sand over which he led his conquering bands. But you, Sir Melton—you cannot—you must not—you will be buried alive, and that is worse than floating in the air.”

“ My choice is made : on the morrow I shall look for a visit ; and, with Plastic’s bill in your pocket—if large enough——” The playful irony with which the three last words were spoken, did not weaken the stern decision of the four first. Bowman felt that remonstrance would be useless, and was silent,

perplexed, and sorrowful. Mowbray read his heart, and pressing his hand, he added, with the tone and fascination which made his smile resistless—"Indeed I shall not want for comfort: if homely, all is neat and clean; and the kind visit of a friend will make me feel I want for nothing more."

On the morrow Bowman came. His reception, the content—real or forced—upon De Mowbray's face, made him happy, and believe that freedom from the city had worked a miracle. Under his arm was the long, and long-expected bill; even De la Bere's store of pockets would not have held it. As prophesied, Plastic had felt the only spur to which he ever answered. He had foreseen the parting hour was at hand, and toiled night and day (Sundays included) to complete the folios of the only "last account" on which his blackened heart was ever bent and earnest.

Mowbray, practised as he had been to lawyers' bills within the last three years, scarcely believed the evidence of his senses. "Eh, Bowman!" he exclaimed, "here is

material for the Duke of York's campaign,— enough of paper to supply the army with cartridges!”

“There is another wagon load in the coach behind,” replied Bowman, with earnest gravity; and, as he spoke, Mr. Jarvie entered with a pile, tied and taped in due order, which rested on his two hands, and was steadied by the round nob of his red chin.

Sir Melton looked with still greater astonishment, and said, in the same strain, “Faith, Bowman, that beats a classic breast-plate of triple brass.”

Bowman shook his head, and made no answer; he could not enter into the spirit of his wonted tone.

“Courage, my gallant friend,” said Mowbray, striving to rally his faithful follower. “What need I fear? have I not Plastic's note of recent date, in which ‘*he fears*’ he has been overpaid?”

“Fears!” cried Bowman, with such bitter and sarcastic tone that even Mowbray was startled; “fears!” he repeated, “that man neither fears God nor the devil!”

“ Shame ! shame ! Bowman ; until this moment I knew not you could be so severe and—I hope—unjust. Well, well, hand me the last volume ; for that, I suspect, is all I shall understand.”

Sir Melton removed the tape, opened its mystic folds, and, glancing to the sum total, he started as if he had unfolded a snake and felt its deadly fang. The amount was above, or equal to, all that he had saved from the wreck ! The sum set aside for this oft-demanded bill—the means of purchasing his commission—his annuity—all would be swept away by this last and overwhelming wave. Want—positive and absolute penury—stared him in the face.

“ The lying, accursed hypocrite ! the fiendish, false deceiver ! the sly and ravenous wolf, who, bleating like a lamb, swallows up the substance of the fallen, and leaves them to starvation ! ” exclaimed Mowbray. And as the tumult of his anger, surprise, and agony, found vent, he dashed the record from his hands, and sought Plastic’s note of “ fears ” and “ acknowledgment.”

The letter was, as may be supposed, worded with a lawyer's skill. There was an acknowledgment, good in equity of the thousands paid; but the "fears," expressive of being overpaid, were of no avail—it was an error—a slight mistake, which did not alter facts. When appealed to, the holy man had sacred duties to perform.

"It was not for himself," he said, as he raised his black eyes until nothing but the white appeared, "for man needs little but the spirit of grace; but he had ties of flesh and blood which made him stern in his demands—the tiger careth for its young,"—and so forth.

A tiger he proved: he had made his spring on the fallen and unsuspecting prey, and fixed his resistless talons. The downy softness of his claws had passed away—his teeth gnashed—his jowls watered with hungry impatience; and now, scorning the delay he had practised, the blood-thirsty monster threatened to arrest the only son of the man who had been one of his greatest and earliest benefactors.

It was suggested that the bill should be taxed, if not disputed; but Mowbray spurned

at the idea: he could not brook a petty contest with the arch one—he panted for liberty, and yielded up his substance to obtain it.

Mr. Plastic gave his receipt in full, and, with something more than methodistical sincerity, he raised his hands and said, “The Lord be praised! how sweet it is to dwell and part in peace!”

As if Misfortune were bent on pursuing her victim to the last, the public securities had greatly fallen with the times. The funds invested to meet this last claim—to realize the only remaining hope of freedom and independence, were sold out at an immense loss; and when this last debt was paid, De Mowbray turned his steps towards his lodging in Palsgrave Place, with scarcely one hundred pounds in his pocket.

It was in the month of September—the heat was excessive—the loosened pavement seemed as if it gasped for breath—a radiation played above its surface, like flames obscured by the brightness of a burning sun, and Mowbray felt as if he breathed the breath of fire. The low but consuming fever of excitement had been

preying on his strength unseen ; but now, like some massive timber, whose slowly-smothered embers burst at once into flames and threatened destruction to the fabric it supported, the fever raged — his pulse was fired — his brain was maddened. -At the period in which our tale is cast, there was, and (for aught we know to the contrary) there still may be, a low old-fashioned shop at the corner of Palsgrave Place, half silversmith's—half gunsmith's ; or, judging from its site and side-door, it might have been a pawnbroker's. It matters not : amidst the medley of miscellaneous articles with their prices marked, was wont to be a large proportion of pistols, from the largest horse to the smallest pocket. De Mowbray had often noticed the shop, its precisely powdered owner, and strange variety of offensive weapons : now, as with dizzy step and reeling intellect he paused as he turned the corner of the shop, and leant against its woodwork for support, the clustered pistols caught his eye, and nothing else. A sudden resolution flashed across his mind : he saw the end and refuge

of his worldly trials ; the slight wire by which the weapons of death were suspended, became invisible ; it seemed, to his distempered vision, as if a hundred outstretched hands offered the means of refuge ; there was not a muzzle but seemed to point direct at him ; and each, with open mouths, whispered in his ear—" Take me—try me—I am your last and only friend."

" It shall be so!" muttered De Mowbray between his teeth, and his strength returned. With firm, yet hurried steps, he passed to his humble home ; with hand as firm as his resolve, he knocked at the door ; with a smile on his lips, and pleasure dancing wildly in his soft black eyes, he welcomed the kind landlady who answered to his summons ; with buoyant step he ascended the stairs ; and, having gained his room, he turned the key as gently as if he had dreaded to break the slumbers of a dying infant.

He was alone—secure from intrusion. As his eye glanced upon his pistol-case, again he muttered, " Yes, it shall be so!" and, strengthened in his purpose, no trembling betrayed the

shadow of doubt. The charge was measured, the bullet firmly forced upon its pillow ; not a grain was spilt, though the pan was brimming ; and, as he examined the fine-edged flint, cocked the pistol and laid it on the table, again a ray of wild and frensied happiness played upon his wan and ghastly features.

“ Yes, it was a blessed thought ! ” he said. “ And now, poor broken heart, if still thou hast a throb to guide thy coming friend, it shall be quickly answered.”

As these words, or rather whispered thoughts, passed Mowbray’s lips, he cast aside his neckcloth, burst the collar of his shirt, grasped the pistol in his right, and seeking with his left the spot where the heart should beat, he pressed to his side the lock of the Lady Helen’s hair.

The engine of death was involuntarily lowered ; he gazed upon the token, and, like a shield of silken beauty, it turned the destroyer’s aim. As the spirit of a pitying angel, Lady Helen’s image stood before him ; and, “ more in sorrow than in anger,” reproved

his fell intent. He trembled in her fancied presence, reason and repentance faintly returned, but his limbs were paralysed; the pistol dropped from his hand, and he fell senseless on the floor.

CHAPTER XII.

A MOTHER'S LOVE.

“None are all evil—quickenings round ‘her’ heart,
One softer feeling would not yet depart.”

BYRON.

THE kind-hearted old lady who had admitted De Mowbray to his lodging, though pleased and flattered by the smile which answered to her welcome, could not banish a strange wildness of expression with which it was accompanied; the smile passed from her recollection, and, with something of dread and awe, she continued to muse upon her lodger's looks.

“All is not right; I fear he must be ill!” she repeated to herself, and framed some excuse to knock at his door. She was still on the stairs when the report of a pistol broke

the thread of her musing ; she listened, and heard something fall heavily on the floor.

With an effort beyond her years, she sprang direct to De Mowbray's door, and called upon his name ; receiving no answer, she tried the lock, and finding that fast, she called loudly for assistance.

When force had gained the admittance which was otherwise denied, the room was filled with smoke, there was a stream of blood upon the floor, and Sir Melton de Mowbray lay apparently dead, with a pistol by his side. Shrieks and lamentations burst from the females who looked on, and did nothing more. The landlady, however, was an exception ; and what with example and command, she made her servants lift De Mowbray's head, and rest it against the foot of the bed. She felt his pulse, his heart, and found the fainting throb of life with a delicacy worthy of her sex ; she shrouded from the bystanders the lock of hair ; she also discovered a wound in the leg which bled profusely, and, binding it up, she waited until further assistance and the surgeon arrived.

The pistol, which, in falling, had discharged itself, had, as may be supposed, inflicted the wound in question, and, probably, saved De Mowbray's life by the loss of blood which it occasioned. Subsequently, other veins were opened in the arm, and on the temple, ere the delirium and fever, which succeeded to suspended animation, could be subdued.

We pass the melancholy details of the bed of sickness; Bowman never left it; if he slept, it was while sitting by its side. With the gentleness of woman, and what is more, with her patience and forbearance, he watched De Mowbray as a mother would her first-born—ay, as a mother, as Lady de Mowbray did hold her vigils over her only and her first-born child, when Bowman, sinking from exhaustion, could scarcely continue in the post he would resign to no other.

It may be remembered, that, in the earlier stage of De Mowbray's altered fortunes, Bowman was surprised by receiving a letter from her, who, never having been divorced, had now become the widow of Sir John de Mow-

bray, and who, though she had trampled on the sacred duties of a wife, could neither cancel nor sear the mother's love for the offspring she had so cruelly deserted.

Should this, and stranger facts which we are about to put on record, appear to some untrue to nature or exaggerated, it will, alas! be to those alone whom youth and innocence have spared as yet the deep knowledge of the world, to those whom the calm and equal tenor of a happy life have not opened the dark mysteries of the human heart. Blessed be their ignorance! for it is a fearful thing to see how lowly the mind and intellect can be debased by sin; how one false step can, by sure, if slow degrees, sap the foundation of all that was great or good, till the mind becomes a chaos, and the tablets of right and wrong are strewed with ruin, judgment is blinded, finer feelings are bruised and blunted, acts are committed and thoughts indulged with cold indifference, which once, in days of innocence, had been deemed beyond the range of human frailty. And yet we speak of woman, like one pure marble column in the midst of

desolation, of rank and poisoned weeds, of the asp and the adder; we have seen the instinct and passion of maternal love untouched, unsullied, while all around was worthless, fallen, and debased; we have seen pleasures deserted, and jewels pawned; rest foregone, and infection risked — all things and thoughts yielding to the devotion of a mother.

Such was Lady de Mowbray; her yearning and affections for her son had survived the wreck of happiness and virtue; it was the only good and gentle thing which had not perished; she watched him from a distance as the fallen angels look to the heaven they have forfeited; it was the one pure pleasure left to hear of his bright career; and when darkness lowered and misfortune burst upon his head, how she longed to fly to his presence; how she loathed her seducer, and, for the first time, humbled herself in bitter, though imperfect repentance!

It was not likely that Bowman, a man who had devoted his home and income to the comforts of his aged mother, would be in-

sensible to the appeal of Lady de Mowbray. An eccentric bachelor, a very child in the ways of the world he might be, but his heart was true to the chords of nature, and he readily promised to write from time to time, and send a faithful report of passing occurrences.

The Hon. Colonel Aston (for such was the name of the man who seduced Lady de Mowbray from her home) was vain, weak, and selfish; extravagance soon exhausted his own means, and thenceforth he clung to the woman he ruined for the sake of her annuity. Fire and water are far less discordant than the elements of the two in question; and if ever (and when does it not?) crime entailed misery upon itself, it was instanced in the pair who lived as Colonel and Mrs. Aston: but the spirit of her who, as Julia Saladin, was proud and soaring, grew fierce, stubborn, and uncompromising in the day of disappointment. She would not seem to repent, she would not leave the man she despised; she brooded in silence on his brutal and selfish littleness, but she never complained. With a mother's long-

ing she pined for the right she had forfeited ; her heart was poisoned ; she fed in secret on the blood of her thoughts, till at length her intellect was impaired, and she sojourned for a time beneath the roof of a private mad-house ; and where, had the keeper been as unprincipled as the man who consigned her to his charge, she would have remained till death. The colonel's wishes and intentions transpired, and indirectly reached the ears of Lady de Mowbray : they were never forgotten, nor forgiven. Kind treatment had restored the balance of reason ; she never alluded to the base ingratitude of him who lived on her means ; but, with the tincture of lurking insanity, *the intention* was written on the memory, and oft and oft a demon whispered, " Blood alone can wash it out ! "

When Bowman communicated the last scene of De Mowbray's tragic course, his utter and hopeless prostration of mind, body, and fortune, Lady de Mowbray felt the mother stirring in every vein and pulse ; she had but one thought, and that was, to hasten to her son.

" He will not know me to curse me, and

I may save his life ; may be all to him which I might have been, which none but a mother can be!" she exclaimed, and hastened to his side.

She saved his life, for so it was ordained ; but where, save in a mother's love, could Providence have found the fitting instrument ? She braved the malignant fever which seized all others, even the physician who came to heal ; her strength seemed supernatural, and human wants subdued. She neither lay her down to sleep, nor turned aside to feed ; by day, by night, she held her vigil, and watched her unconscious son ; and, as his spirit seemed to hover between earth and eternity, oh ! how fervently she hoped he might be spared ! She raised her eyes to heaven, she longed to pray, but dared not ; the sense of her unworthiness fell like ice around her, and froze the voice of rising prayer.

The fever preyed like a volcano upon itself, raged while there were forces left to feed it, and died away with their utter exhaustion. To this succeeded a calm, which, if it were not death, appeared the mockery of life. For

days De Mowbray lay on his back speechless, senseless, motionless; it seemed as if the power of suffering and the need of sustenance had passed, and yet decay withheld its dread pollution; the quickness of a mother's ear had caught the breath of life, the vivid fancy of her hopes had whispered, "He is saved!"

In attempting to convey a notion of De Mowbray's features, allusion was made to the classic beauty of Napoleon in his days of young aspiring: it may be, an engraving of the same when stretched upon his bier at St. Helena, is familiar to most. Oh! how strongly did it recall the memory of De Mowbray to those who had seen him in this death-like trance! and this, in despite of the difference of years—for, in the sketch alluded to, the features of the fallen emperor seemed to have regained the cast they wore when first he soared on the wings of the eagle, and Italia gazed with awe and wonder on the youthful conqueror. And, doubtless, it was so; few are prone to flatter the dead and fallen; and often, alas! too often, we have remarked how the corpse grows young, as if death had

vanquished sorrow, and restored the expression of young and happy days. Forgive the thoughts which led us to digress.

Thus buoyed by hope, Lady de Mowbray watched, like the husbandman who looks with resignation to the reward of his toil, to relieve the throbbing of her noble brow; her hair was loosened to its native waves, and fell, with lovely wildness, on her shoulders; an Indian shawl, light, yet rich, enveloped her commanding figure; nothing could have been less studied, or more simple; but, as she bent one knee, and, resting an elbow on the bed, supported her forehead by a hand and arm of symmetry, she was a study as perfect as when Sir Joshua had drawn her as the sibyl of the woods. There are some beings so innately fraught with grace and dignity, that its essence shews in all they wear and all they do—such was the mother of De Mowbray.

As thus fixed, and all but pale as the chiselled marble, she gazed upon the beauty of her first-born, and looked as if her eyes would pierce his heavy eyelids; they slowly opened, and the mother's gaze was met by one

as fixed and searching as her own ; she could not stir—she could not speak—it was like the dead awaking—she scarcely dared to breathe, lest the vision should be borne away ; her lips were parted : and as thus, with fears and feelings which seemed to hush the very throb of life, she gazed in fascination, a low, soft, and silver voice exclaimed — “ My mother ! ” and again the eyelids closed.

“ My son ! my own and only child ! ” cried Lady de Mowbray, as she seized the helpless hand which was lying on the bed, and pressed it to her lips.

Again De Mowbray raised his eyelids, gazed for an instant on his mother’s face, and again they closed, as if the effort were too much.

A thousand recollections rushed upon the mother’s mind ; she trembled like the aspen leaf, and, with imploring agony, said,—“ Oh, turn not away ! curse not your wretched mother ! my son ! my only son ! oh, speak, but not to curse me ! ”

“ Curse thee, my mother ! ” said De Mowbray, shaking his head, and adding, faintly, “ No—never ! never ! ”

He could say no more ; but a smile, sweet and soft as the shadow of beauty, played upon his pallid face.

“ And thou dost not—wilt not curse me? thou wilt look on me again?” whispered the trembling mother in his ear.

De Mowbray pressed her hand, and drew it to his lips, and then, as rallying every reviving force, he opened his full expressive eyes, and looked the love he felt.

“ Curse thee! turn from thee, my mother!” he said, “ *I have never forgotten thee!*”

A pang of self-reproach passed, like a poisoned dagger, through the mother’s heart, as she heard this touching proof of treasured recollections; the evil and agonizing hour of parting flashed with vivid force, but, fearful of losing the harmony of words so sweet, she suppressed all outward shew of what she felt.

“ By day, and by night,” continued her son, after a slight pause; “ for weeks and weeks I have seen you, my mother, in my dreams, but my voice was choked ; I longed to embrace you, but there was a gulf between us; oh! a fiery gulf; how fearfully have I

dreamed ; or can it be ?” And, as if endued with sudden strength, he raised himself in bed, and, looking round, as if to catch the truth, he threw his arms around his mother’s neck, and, while his tears fell, like dew, upon her silken locks, he said,—“ I see, I know it now—it was no dream ; my mother, a second time I owe my life to thee !”

“ And thou canst forgive me ?” asked Lady de Mowbray, as she clasped her hands in agonies of doubt.

De Mowbray attempted to reply, but could not, from exhaustion ; then, turning from himself the hands which were clasped together, he pointed to the heavens, as if he would have said, “ ’Tis there that we must ask forgiveness !” and fell back as inanimate as he had been for days.

And here we drop the veil upon the mother and her son—let their prayers and their love be sacred from the world.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DUEL, AND MURDER.

“ Revenge is but a frailty incident
To crazed and sickly minds.”

OLDHAM.

“ ———— Revenge, at first though sweet,
Bitter, ere long, on itself recoils.”

MILTON.

THERE are master-chimneysweeps, men who brush away the regal soot from royal chimneys, who, in their way, are very superior to others in their black profession; and so it always happens, even among those gentlemen who, blending notoriety with retirement, fix their abode at the *court-end* of a street, and have the luxury of a private *entrée*. We allude to the order of men who, when the signs of the day were not deemed vulgarity, were wont to

blazon three golden balls, and write themselves — “ pawnbroker.”

And will truth be startled — will it seem improbable, if not impossible, that a being such as Julia Saladin appeared in our opening pages, that Lady de Mowbray had been reduced to dealings with a being of this order, and, by degrees, had grown familiar with the stern necessity? It may be so : and yet, within how little of England’s red-brick palace, of the street which bears its name, could we lead the sceptic to conviction, on floor above floor ; how easy it were to shew the coronet in pledge, the gilt and silver service, banished from its noble home, or, at most, redeemed but for the uses of a day, and then returned to aid its owner’s needs ! What jewellery, trinkets, gifts, once hallowed and sacred in the eye of love, would be seen in this, or suchlike magazines of splendid poverty ! and well it had been, if Lady de Mowbray had always had the sacred cause of filial wants to plead for such debasing and unhappy dealings ! Nothing, from diamonds to her very dresses, was spared, which could

purchase advice, luxury, or comfort, for him who was her first-born.

Well it had been had this purer motive been free from base alloy; but there was another being, ay, and lodged beneath the very self-same roof; one whose wants and importunities were silenced by the self-same means; one who never scrupled to forestall the coming quarter -- the Honourable (accursed mockery!) the *honourable* Colonel Aston!

“Again! impossible!” may be exclaimed, by those who have not marked the downward passage of an erring sinner, and know how low the great can fall, how fearfully vice and dishonour can become their familiars. Lady de Mowbray neither felt nor thought of the gross and glaring wrong of harbouring her seducer in the house where she hoped to save her dying son.

De Mowbray slowly and gradually recovered strength. In the first moments of overflowing gratitude, he forgot all but the debt he owed to her who had saved his life, he only felt the happiness of having found the

long-lost author of his days — the erring, banished mother. To this succeeded darker thoughts; and questions which he longed, but feared, to put, rose upon his tongue, then died in silence as he met his mother's look of wild impassioned love.

When able to sit up for a few hours in the day, he insisted upon his mother's retirement to the rest she so greatly needed. Aware of the state to which affliction of mind or body had once reduced her, he marked with trembling the flitting fancies which seemed at times to lead her thoughts to melancholy, deep abstractions, and then again, to a haggard wildness of expression, which told of suffering, or passions intensely warring with the powers of reason; it was awful to behold their workings, heedless and unconscious of all around.

“My mother!” would De Mowbray utter, in his sweetest tone, as he framed some want or question; and, like madness yielding to the soul of music, in an instant the appalling vision fled; calmness, love, and smiles, returned to answer the appeal.

It was during one of these temporary ab-

sences of his mother, that De Mowbray was startled by a tap at his door; when, in answer to the permission to enter, the kind-hearted old lady slowly presented herself to make inquiries after his health.

After these points had been answered, with many grateful acknowledgments for kind attention, De Mowbray said,—

“ And Lady de Mowbray—I hope you have done all in your power to ensure her comfort?”

“ Sir! Sir Melton!” echoed the landlady, with a look of vacant astonishment, never having heard of a lady by that name; “ I beg your pardon, Sir Melton, I don’t quite understand you!” she added, after a pause of mutual wonder.

“ I asked after Lady de Mowbray; I hope the accommodation of your house affords more than a mere couch; she has her separate bedroom?”

“ Who, Sir Melton—your wife? I did not know you were married!” cried the landlady, with evident alarm, and thinking her lodger’s delirium had returned, she gradually backed

her chair towards the door, though she had not the resolution to rise.

“Wife! married!” echoed De Mowbray in his turn; “the woman must be mad!” and, by his look of strange surprise, confirmed the impression his words had made.

“I beg your pardon, Sir Melton; I meant no offence!” said the landlady, who, having backed within a few yards of the door, jumped up and seized the handle to secure a retreat.

“Indeed, my good lady, you have but astonished me, as much, indeed, as you yourself appear to be astonished by an inquiry for my poor exhausted mother.”

“Oh, dear! now, how stupid—the Honourable Mrs. Aston as is?”

“Who?” cried De Mowbray, starting up as if he had been shot through the heart, and fixing his dark and flashing eyes on the terrified landlady.

“Who? speak, woman! whom did you say?” repeated De Mowbray, who had arrested her flight by grasping her arm and closing the door.

“Indeed, indeed, Sir Melton, I never

meant no offence; for Heaven's sake do not kill me!" and the landlady, convinced that a fit of raging delirium was coming on, sank on her knees and implored her life.

"My kind and gentle hostess," said De Mowbray, in his softest tone, as he raised her up, and, by an effort, concealed the warring elements which raged within his bosom; "fear not, for I am calm; but tell me—she who has watched and saved my life—my mother—is she called—how is she called?" he added, changing the mode of inquiry, to avoid the accursed name, which he could not speak.

"Called, Sir Melton? why, of course, by her husband's name; don't you know the Honourable Colonel Aston?"

"*I do!*" he replied, in a deep and under tone; and then, as if he had forgotten to answer direct, he added, abruptly, "No, I never saw him."

"Not seen him, Sir Melton? why, he has been here all the time!"

"Here! beneath this roof?" he asked, faintly, as if he doubted the evidence of his ears.

“ Yes, Sir Melton, and caught your fever ; but he’s better now, and sitting in his dressing-room, while your dear good mother, Mrs. Aston, is sleeping on his bed.”

“ Enough ! enough !” cried De Mowbray, with such quick and deep-concentred agony of look and voice, that once more the landlady started back with fear and trembling ; it was but momentary : again he mastered the racking torture he endured, and shrouded the deadly purpose of his mind. Pointing downwards with his finger, he asked,—“ In the rooms beneath ?” and, being satisfied on this head, he repeated his thanks, and pleading headach, requested to be left alone.

Alone ! oh, what a blessed word were that, could it ever be ; but who can be alone except the dead ? till earthly thoughts and passions meet annihilation, who can be alone ?

De Mowbray, left to himself, felt but a thousand demons tugging at his heart ; the past, present, and future, teemed with acts and actors ; the earlier symptoms of his fever returned ; again his brain and pulses beat as if his blood were fluid fire ; but the purport of

his madness was fixed, and hatred and revenge subdued the elements of strife to their fulfilment.

“Ye gracious powers! is this ordained? Is this insanity, or have I heard aright? The hardened, heartless wretch, to make his lair, and couch himself beneath this very roof! Psha! his poisoned breath rises beneath my nostril, and spreads around contagion more deadly than the plague; but his destiny is fixed, and shall be written with this point of steel; my father’s wrongs shall be redressed, or I will die in seeking the atonement.”

As De Mowbray said this, he seized his sword, a weapon which, if no longer carried by the side, was still frequently resorted to in affairs of honour; his eyes had sought in vain for his pistol-case, and he gladly discovered an instrument silent, and in his hands, as certain as the bullet.

With firm, yet cautious hand, he opened the door, and listened; in the distance he caught the landlady’s voice, who was probably relating to her household her recent alarms. The body of the house was unruffled by voice

or step. As he slowly descended the stairs, they creaked beneath his feet, and, like a robber in the night, he cursed their watchword of alarm, and feared they would rob him of his purpose.

Unseen, unheard, he entered the room beneath his own; no one challenged his approach; all was still as the grave; he paused to consider if he had not mistaken the door, when a faint breathing arrested his attention; there was a large high-backed chamber-chair, which faced the window; a few steps revealed the object of his visit.

Robed in a fashionable undress, with a book in the hand which rested on his knee, slumbered a military-looking man, who, amidst the lines stamped by evil passions, retained the traces of manly beauty. De Mowbray paused, for he knew not the man he sought; but, while he gazed upon the sleeper, it seemed as if his presence had been felt, such a curl of devilish scorn crept upon the lip. Doubt and hesitation fled—he raised his sword as in the act of sheathing it in the seducer's heart, and using his left hand with slow but

steady pressure on the colonel's shoulder, he said in his ear, "Awake, Colonel Aston!" for he, indeed, it was.

He started at the summons, and was about to rise, resist, or call for aid, when his intentions were checked by hearing—

"Stir, or speak, and you die this instant. I came not to rob the spoiler, nor murder the sleeping, but I seek atonement which blood alone can wash away."

"Who are you, in the name of Heaven?" asked the colonel, as he recovered his self-possession.

"In the name of hell—in the name of every accursed spirit—are you not the man who branded my mother and her son with infamy? Are you not the *Honourable* Colonel Aston?" said De Mowbray, in a tone so deep and passionate, with a look of such withering hatred, that the colonel felt it needless to repeat his question: he, too, knew the man before him. "Are you not that Colonel Aston? speak!" repeated De Mowbray, while he still held the sword at his heart.

"My name is Aston!" replied the colonel.

“ Enough ! then one or both must die ! Sir John de Mowbray’s son seeks atonement for his father’s wrongs, and he will have it, or revenge, this instant ; say you will fight me with a soldier’s honour ; or, by the Heaven you blasphemed, you shall die this moment ! ” And the point of the sword was lowered until it touched the body.

“ Colonel Aston has never shrunk from such appeal. Unhand me, sir ! and this very instant — here, with no witness but ourselves, my sword shall prove my words ! ”

De Mowbray relieved his grasp, retired to an open space, locked the door, and, heedless of consequences, awaited his antagonist. In an instant their weapons crossed, and two of the best swordsmen of the day stood opposed to each other ; the one fighting as if he thirsted for the blood which was to wash away the stain branded from infancy upon his brow ; the other, with the coolness of one accustomed to defend, or take the breath of life.

Both had stood but yesterday upon the threshold of death ; and now, pale, weak, and emaciated, they staked the life which Provi-

dence had saved, and rallied all remaining strength to slay. The result seemed doubtful; already De Mowbray had received a flesh-wound, and twice his sword had drank the seducer's blood; their strength was failing — De Mowbray's rapidly; he felt that it was so, and he rallied every remaining force; he practised all that the skill of eye and hand could reach, and, with a quick and deadly lunge, he thought to reach the heart of his antagonist; the aim was unerring, but the point was turned by one of the huge buttons (then in fashion), and, while a trifling wound was inflicted, De Mowbray staggered, and all but fell with the effort he had made.

Colonel Aston, scarcely less exhausted, but with undying rage, was about to follow up his advantage, when a side-door opened, and, with a shriek which pierced the walls, Lady de Mowbray arrested his purpose, seized an Indian dagger, and, throwing herself between the two, she struck it into the side of her heartless seducer.

“ And wouldst thou slay my son? Must guiltless blood cement the ruin thou hast

wrought? Oh, thou worse than demon!" she exclaimed, as, with wild and bloodshot eye, she stood like a tigress before its rescued offspring, and watched the colonel till he had fallen all but senseless on the floor; then, turning to her son, she attempted to throw her arms around his neck.

"My mother! alas, my most unhappy, wretched mother!" exclaimed De Mowbray, in agony of feeling, as he shunned her looks and her embrace.

"My son! speak to me—turn not away, I have but saved your life!" cried the distracted mother.

"Alas, alas! my mother! this was not well!" said De Mowbray, as he stooped to withdraw the dagger from the colonel's side, and heard him murmur, amidst convulsive throes—

"Murdered! murdered! murdered!"

De Mowbray, with the reasoning of the duellist, was horror-struck at seeing the blow inflicted by another which he had sought to strike; it was a relief to find that the wound was slight; he was about to apply his handker-

chief to stanch the blood, when Lady de Mowbray, as she watched the action of her son, and gazed upon the waved and reeking steel, whispered, in a low, unearthly voice—

“ The point is poisoned ! ”

“ Poisoned ! ” echoed De Mowbray, faintly ; and added, with a voice of deep despair, “ then is the measure of our wo complete ! our cup of misery is full, and there will the poison lurk ! ”

“ And I will drain it to the dregs. Give *me* the dagger ! ” cried Lady de Mowbray, with wild and frantic gesture.

Voices were heard without — there was a knocking at the door — attempts to force it.

“ Hush ! hark ! quick ! quick ! they come, Melton ; they’ll see the dagger in your hand ; tell them *I* did the deed ; say I set the spirit free which would have chained me living to the madhouse. Ha, ha, ha ! but they shall not harm thee, my son ! ” cried Lady de Mowbray, changing suddenly from the laugh of insanity to a tone of deep, impassioned love, and again striving to fling her arms around the neck of her son.

“Murdered! murdered!” once more groaned forth the dying man.

One door was now yielding to the outward pressure—footsteps were heard approaching by another, which led to Colonel Aston’s bedroom.

Lady de Mowbray struggled to possess herself of the dagger; De Mowbray was obliged to rally every nerve to withhold the means of self-destruction, and, in the struggle, his mother’s foot slipped in a pool of clotted blood, and, striking her head against the projection of a bookcase, she fell senseless on the floor.

The landlady, alarmed by the clashing of swords, had called to her neighbours for assistance, and entered at this moment. Even Colonel Aston, in the agonies of death, was roused by the crash of wood, mingled with the uproar of voices and footsteps; on a sudden they paused, as they looked on the prostrate forms of Colonel Aston and Lady de Mowbray, and saw Sir Melton in the act of kneeling by the side of the latter, with the bloody dagger still within his grasp.

“ Seize him! seize him! seize the murderer!” cried Colonel Aston, as, with an expiring effort, he raised himself on one elbow, and pointed to De Mowbray — a fiendish laugh convulsed his features, he fell back, and expired.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TRIAL.

“ A generous fierceness dwells with innocence,
And conscious virtue is allowed some pride.”

DRYDEN.

“ Ah, me ! what dangers do environ
The man that meddles with cold iron.”

Hudibras.

DE MOWBRAY, heedless of all but the senseless body of his mother, threw aside the dagger, and strove to bear her to the sofa ; his efforts were seconded by the landlady and others. This last office was scarcely performed, when his arms were seized, and a voice said, “ You are our prisoner ! ”

Resistance had been vain, had such a thought occurred ; but, with the word “ prisoner,” the closing scene of coming destiny flashed before his eyes ; he bowed to the fiat, printed a farewell kiss on the marble brow of

his unconscious parent, and then, with the firmness and decision of his character, he calmly ordered the officers to do their duty.

While waiting for the coach which was to carry him to Bow Street, the faithful Bowman arrived to pay his daily visit. The horror, the agony, the affection which this artless creature betrayed, may be easily conceived, and were well nigh enough to unman the prisoner; but there was a stern and deep resolve upon his breast which cased the weakness and infirmity of love; the iron of the outward man had frozen the warm and gentle springs which burst from the heart in the sunny days of life. He was not unkind, but, with solemn, fervent, and unbending manner, he turned Bowman to his purpose, and checked his unavailing sorrow.

Gaining permission from the officers to speak to Bowman in private, De Mowbray explained, in a few words, that the hour was arrived when his devotion would be put to the test. He conjured him to remove his mother at once from the house; he stated, as indeed he had been convinced, that, for some days

past, her mind had been failing from the fatigues she had undergone, and was likely to suffer more deeply from the scenes of to-day. He gave the address of a physician near Bath, where she had already received the utmost care, and would again find the kindness and refuge of a home. There was neither time nor opportunity to contest the point; and, pressing his hand convulsively, he despatched Bowman on his mission before he could extend his inquiries, or witness his own departure from the fatal roof.

Within a little while, Sir Melton de Mowbray, accompanied by two officers, was on his way to Bow Street, charged with murder! Within two hours, his mother, alternately frantic and desponding, was seated in a travelling carriage, and, accompanied by Bowman and a female attendant, was on her road to the residence of one whose profession was “to minister to a mind diseased.”

In the first moment of excitement and exaggeration, the evidence against Sir Melton de Mowbray was much too powerful to admit of doubt. It was stated by a medical man,

that Colonel Aston had died from poison; a dagger, such as is commonly known to be poisoned, was seen in De Mowbray's hand, reeking with blood; his sword, also bloody, was found by his side, and it was even asserted that the colonel was unarmed: this, too, without searching beneath the bookcase or furniture, under which his (the colonel's) sword might have fallen.

De Mowbray declined saying a word in his own defence. He spoke not of the wound he himself had received, nor of Colonel Aston's proposition to fight without seconds; he thought of the dying injunction of his father: "Remember, she was your mother; promise to protect and shield her!" His course was resolved; rather than live to see his mother borne to the gibbet as a murderess, he determined to redeem his pledge by the sacrifice of life. The commitment was made out; once more the bloodstained gates of Temple Bar were passed, and Sir Melton de Mowbray, the last of a race whose titled ancestors had died on the field of Agincourt, was conducted to Newgate to die like a felon.

Before Mr. De la Bere's departure for the wilds of Ireland, he had exacted a promise from De Mowbray that he would write fully and often. The black Mr. Plastic's conduct had been faithfully reported, and the depression of spirits, energy, and mind, which were then laying the foundation of subsequent illness, tinged his letters; they betrayed a sadness so tinctured with the wildness of despair, that the kind-hearted De la Bere determined to return to England, to cheer, by his presence, and aid by his means, the proud favourite he cherished as a father would a son. The meeting was in Newgate,—it was a trial which De Mowbray had hoped to escape.

“Melton! my poor, ill-fated Melton!” exclaimed De la Bere, as he discovered his pale and altered features.

De Mowbray was too much surprised to speak; as a father and son they met, and wept on each other's shoulders.

“But tell me—speak to me, Melton; you are not, cannot be guilty of a crime so foul? Speak, in mercy, tell me all!”

Mowbray shook his head, and was silent.

Again the fountain of his feelings froze ; his soul was iron, and immovable ; the utmost that De la Bere could gain in answer to his entreaties was, “ Wait until the day of trial, and then the truth shall be told.”

The affair, of course, became the talk of the world ; once more the name of De Mowbray was upon every tongue ; the papers abounded with a thousand anecdotes of his life : but, if we except the agonised sufferings of one lovely being, how few, alas ! spoke or read with more than the feelings of excited curiosity.

Colonel Aston was the heir-presumptive to his uncle, Sir John Woodstock, an old, infirm man, abounding in wealth, which he delighted to accumulate ; and the nephew of such a man was not to be killed with impunity. Hundreds, rejoicing in their hearts at the death of the heir, paid court to the miser by expressing their condolence, and officiously offered their services in aiding the prosecution.

It were safer to rouse the lion, than tread upon the adder ; no creature so malignant as a little-minded man who has been made

to feel his own inferiority. Such a one was Lord Droneswing, a distant connexion of the old baronet, who, by an effort of memory sharpened by hatred, recalled the words which he had overheard at Brookes's, when De Mowbray had startled Mr. De la Bere by a depth of feeling for which he had never given him credit.

"Well," said he, with heartless jocularity, "I hope the proud De Mowbray is better now, for *he has slain the man who robbed his mother of her honour.*"

The words, and as much of the conversation as he had picked up and stored, were reported to Sir John Woodstock, who was bent on seeking justice for the scion of his house, whom he left penniless when living.

The young lord was added to the list of witnesses already subpoenaed; and, alas! for the noble and distracted De la Bere, he too was called upon to give his evidence against the man he loved as a son, and, with the honour of an English gentleman, to speak "the whole truth."

The day of trial arrived: within a few

moments from the opening of the doors, the court was crowded to excess, and many amidst the many were beings who claimed the rank of "lady," if they deserved not the gentle title of "woman."

As was usual, until our altered laws granted the murderer more than four-and-twenty hours to make his peace with Heaven, the trial was fixed for Saturday the 15th, in order to give the benefit of an intervening Sabbath, in case the accused should be condemned to death.

The prisoner had scarcely been placed at the bar, when the judge, punctual to his appointment, entered and took his seat. Silence was ordered in the court; the crowd, which had tossed to and fro like a living wave, was stilled; silence, solemn as the pause which heralds the thunderbolt, reigned around, and every eye was fixed upon Sir Melton de Mowbray.

"By God and my country!" he answered, to the usual question of how he would be tried; but in a tone of such deep and silver harmony, that ears familiar and insensible to words of course, felt, for once, their force and solemnity.

“ Guilty, or not guilty ? ” inquired the judge ; and as if he, too, acknowledged the general impression, there was more than his wonted earnestness of manner.

“ *Not guilty*, my lord ! ” replied De Mowbray, in a tone firm but subdued. There was a slight buzz—a whisper, mingled with sighs, which seemed to relieve the bosom, when these two words were spoken. It was but a mere judicial form—the *ipse dixit* of the one arraigned ; but rays of hope passed from eye to eye when they were uttered, so strongly were they stamped with the force of simple truth.

De Mowbray’s lips closed, and assumed such character of firmness, that from that moment he scarcely appeared to breathe. But for the dark mysterious eyes, to which neither pen nor pencil, and, oh ! still less the chisel, could do justice, he might have been deemed the *beau idéal* of a sculptor’s hand. Pale and emaciated though he was, never had his classic features beamed with such high and commanding beauty ; it sat upon his brow like a coronet of dignity ; it defied the power of degradation ; and the reckless bearing of the boldest counsel

quailed beneath his glance, and learnt the lesson of respect.

The leading facts of the case are before the reader: it needs but little ingenuity to conceive how the tortuous eloquence of the prosecutor's counsel set forth the prisoner's guilt, and subsequently sought to substantiate the charge of the evidence of Lord Droneswing and others.

Sir Melton had obstinately refused the aid of all counsel; and when he was called upon for his defence, the silence was so deathlike, it seemed as if a spirit could not pass unheard.

“My lord,” said De Mowbray, speaking as if the power of calmness and self-possession centred in him alone, “and you, gentlemen, on whose voice my life depends,—to one and both I offer my grateful thanks for the patience, attention, and impartiality with which you have listened to the evidence against me. It is not, believe me, from any want of respect to the ways and wisdom of our laws, that I have declined the aid of counsel—it is not that I am insensible to the awful position in which I stand—still less is it, that I arrogate to myself the acuteness and eloquence which dis-

tinguish the bar. Whatever be my motive, I shall attempt neither one nor the other;— I shall neither seek to deform the beauty of truth by the garb of exaggeration, nor weaken your judgment by appealing to your feelings. The plea which I offered when put upon my trial, will constitute my sole defence; I have but to repeat that I am—*not guilty*.”

When De Mowbray had pronounced these words, he slowly folded his arms upon his breast; his lips curled; one glance of proud defiance flashed from beneath his silken lashes—it was but an instant: the next, his features reposed in dignity—all was calm, resigned, and unfathomable.

The deathlike stillness continued,—the judge himself paused, and appeared as if he had expected more. Looks, rapid and anxious, were passed from the dock to the bench; and when, previously to summing up, the judge turned over his notes, never was the rustling of the sibyl leaves heard with more emotion.

During the course of the trial, the learned judge had, in a great degree, supplied the want of counsel, which Sir Melton de Mow-

bray had refused. From the servant who spoke as to finding the prisoner's sword with blood upon its point, it also appeared, that he subsequently found Colonel Aston's sword close to the skirting-board, and concealed by the bookcase under which it had rolled; on this, also, was the stain of blood. The landlady spoke decidedly as to the clashing of swords, before she gave the alarm.

“These,” said the judge, in summing up and addressing the jury, “were facts which must be borne in mind, the more especially as there was no evidence to shew how the contest began.”

With perspicuity and clearness he explained the distinction between manslaughter and murder, and how the law affected the duellist; that “in no case,” he added, “excepting that of an injured husband surprising an adulterer, was a man justified in taking the law into his own hands. It was the wise purport of legislation to prevent the necessity of doing so; and neither the husband, brother, nor children of an adulteress—however deeply they might feel the stigma of dishonour reflected by the

guilty on the innocent—could ever be justified in shedding the offender's blood. The spirit of revenge, whatever the provocation, was neither to be fostered nor acted on, or society would shortly be converted to a band of assassins."

Of course, the strong fact of the colonel's death by poison—of a dagger (subsequently *proved* to be poisoned) being seen in Sir Melton de Mowbray's hand, and which, beyond all doubt, was the instrument of death—were also mentioned in the summing up.

"If," said the judge, in concluding his address to the jury,—“if there be the shadow of doubt upon your minds, let it weigh in the prisoner's behalf. Your verdict will affect the life of a fellow-creature, who is either innocent or guilty. To decide this awful question, you must banish every idle tale which may have reached your ears ere you entered this tribunal; you must suppress those feelings which are likely to blind your judgment: but remember, though sworn to decide with unspotted conscience according to the evidence adduced, the sword of justice should be held by the hand of mercy, and where a doubt prevails, let it be

thrown into the scale which holds the verdict of acquittal. I say thus much, because the witness who might have thrown light on the case, is, though living, dead to the exercise of reason—Lady de Mowbray, the mother of the prisoner.”

At these words the prisoner gave a slight, but involuntary start ; there was a scarcely perceptible tremor of the upper lip, but it passed in an instant. De Mowbray had seized the tell-tale traitor with his teeth—he bit it through, but it trembled no more ; it was the first and last time that his feelings mastered the power of concealment.

“The mother of the prisoner,” repeated the judge, interrupted in some measure by the attention which was suddenly directed to the prisoner, “might, perhaps, have been able to supply that fulness of light which you may deem to be wanting, but she has been smitten by the hand of the Almighty ; her intellect is clouded by the darkness of insanity, and she has been spared the afflicting task of appearing as a witness. Gentlemen, I now leave the case in your hands, and look with

confidence to your calm and unbiassed judgment."

The jury begged to retire, to consider their verdict: they had scarcely done so, when the foreman suddenly turned round, and said, "My lord, we are agreed!"

The hopes of acquittal, which had risen with the indecision of the jury, ebbed apace; and within a little they withered the auditory with that one, but fearful word—"Guilty!"

The judge asked the prisoner if there were any reason why sentence should not be passed upon him.

"None, my lord: it were idle to repeat my plea," replied De Mowbray, as he bowed towards the bench; and, having once more folded his arms, he awaited the sentence of the law.

The judge put on the fatal cap; his voice trembled; many a pure and sparkling drop fell on the judgment-seat; there was not a dry eye in the court: De Mowbray alone was calm, possessed, tearless, and resigned.

CHAPTER XV.

PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

“ Parmi les plus curieux (mémoires), est certainement la lettre dans laquelle la Comtesse de Nithesdale raconte la manière dont elle tira son mari des cachets de Newgate, où les suites de la rebellion de 1715, l'avaient amené avec l'infortuné Conte de Derwentwater.

“ ‘ Vers le soir, quand tout fut prêt, j'appelai Madame Mill, et lui fis part de mon projet. Mon intention était de favoriser l'évasion du Conte, car il n'y avait plus pour lui aucune espérance de pardon, et cette nuit était celle qui devait précéder l'exécution.

“ ‘ Les gardes ouvrent la porte, nous descendons l'escalier, lui simulant sans cesse la plus vive affliction, moi le pressant toujours de se hâter ; au pied de l'escalier je rencontre ma fidèle Evans, à qui je le confie.’ ”

BENJAMIN LA ROCHE.

IN the corner of the prison forming a part of that street on which Newgate has conferred its gloomy name, are “ the condemned cells.”

The rugged, black, unbroken walls which form the exterior, sad and sombre as their aspect be, reflect but faintly the dark and

terrible agony of soul which oft—alas! too oft—weighs on those whom our late bloody code sentenced to the punishment of death.

The sun is bright; thousands, millions, at liberty without, pass without a sigh—without one thought—bestowed on the wretched prisoners within: the stream of life flows past the melancholy, massive walls, as heedless as the sparkling waters glide by the surface of some dark enduring rock.

But thus it is—and De Mowbray knew it: he had been too deeply schooled to expect or seek the sympathy of the heartless world; his higher hopes, his trust, were placed on one above; his earthly love centred in a few, tried and known by the touchstone of misfortune. But he felt not the less: if his affections, in the essence of undivided love, gathered imperishable force; so, in proportion, great were the pangs he endured when he thought of the affliction which his stern resolve would cause to the few by whom he was beloved.

Of this the world knew nothing. It has been seen how the deep workings of his soul

were shrouded to the last; his courage, that rarest and most difficult of its kind—the courage of calm endurance, supported him on the day of trial; and as he passed the press-room, and was conducted through the narrow passage which led to his cell, his step was firm, his voice and manner unchanged, and yet (for, in those days, the press-room had not been converted into cells for solitary confinement) his vivid fancy pictured the block on which his irons would be knocked off, or, speaking less technically, where the rivets would be punched out, ere death gave liberty to the immortal spirit.

But when the locks and bolts cut him off from human eye, and he recalled the uses of the vaulted cell in which he was immured, he felt that he was already standing in the gate of eternal life; one more step, and it would be passed. It was not for himself,—for his spirit had been chastened, and the bitterness of death removed,—but for those, the few who loved, and would be left behind—for the manner and circumstances in which he was doomed to pass

away. Ah! this, indeed, fell with appalling weight upon his mind, and he had been more or less than human, had he not bowed to the agony of such harrowing thoughts.

As he paced the cell, or measured its narrow limits with his eye—as he looked on the plain deal-board fixed as a desk in the corner, the uncouth iron bedstead, with mattress, blanket, and rug—his only furniture,—the almost regal apartments of his father's house, the scenes and luxuries in which he had been lapped, arose to mind with the fairy freshness of youth. The fleeting years of his short, yet chequered life, passed in review; the contrast between the past and present—the end and consummation of his destiny—oh! this, in his utter solitude, let loose the floodgates of his heart, and burst the iron breastplate of stern indifference.

“I must—I will weep no more!” De Mowbray exclaimed with difficulty; for his feelings, long suppressed, had all but choked his utterance. “Oh, for the breath of heaven! the green fields and liberty!—alas! alas! never, never more will they be mine! I have drank of their sweets, but shall taste them no

more." And, as these thoughts assumed the form of words, they were associated with others which he dared not speak *but in thought*. Lady Helen was again by his side, and together they were bounding over the velvety and sweeping downs of Dorset. As if her form were ever mingled with the vision of a spirit, his eyes were involuntarily raised; the one small window which admitted light and air, gave, indeed, to view its niggard patch of sky: but it was far aboveh is reach; and, as if to imprison the flight of thought itself, strong massive bars crossed the inaccessible opening. The vision passed; cold and cheerless reality called to recollection the little which still remained to be done.

"Yes," said De Mowbray, as he once more paced the cell, and struggled to collect his thoughts,—“yes, there needs no better furniture: there is the desk on which the guilty may write the confession of their crimes, or the innocent their last farewell, their will, or wishes; and here,” he added, as he threw himself on the mattrass, “the condemned may learn that his earthly wants are passing

away — that, soon, a space less than this wretched pallet will suffice.”

His first effort was to pen a letter to Bowman, to quiet his alarms, and blind him to the truth until his life had fulfilled the sacrifice of filial love. Alas! it was but too easy: with too much of truth was he able to say, “ Within a little my troubles will have ceased, and I shall be at rest.” Well might he have added, in the touching words of “ The Deserter’s Meditations,”

“ Now death befriending,
His last aid lending,
My woes are ending —
My griefs are done !”

But this reading of the fatal truth he veiled from the faithful being who watched his mother. Nor was the effort difficult. Had he not heard his father’s dying prayer, “ to shield *her*” from the world or infamy—had he not pledged his life to do so, he felt that he could have yielded up a thousand lives to save her, who bore him in the womb, from the charge of murder. In imagination, he had seen her

arraigned in the felon's dock ; with vivid and excruciating force, fancy had pictured her stately form standing beneath the gibbet—her neck, more graceful than the swan's, circled by the hangman's halter—heartless, gaping crowds around ; and then—oh ! horror of horrors !—her limbs, of perfect symmetry, given to the gaze and knife of the dissector and his pupils ! A thousand lives ! had he possessed ten thousand thousand, he would have given them all, to ward this sentence from his mother.

There was another letter—one which must be written ere he could die in peace ; but this, indeed, was a harder task. The sentence which in fancy he had imaged for his mother, was, in reality, ordained for himself ; the lock of hair which he had worn at his heart, as a part of, yet dearer than, himself,—the sacred and only relic which remained of his deep, ill-fated passion,—would be torn from the spot where he had doomed it to rest in life, and perish in the grave ; unhallowed eyes and hands would pollute the treasure. “ This must not be,” he cried, as he pressed the

silken ringlets to his lips, and studded them with tears: “and to her is due the only consolation I can offer. She will believe my word, and must not think me guilty.” Again and again he kissed the relic; and, resting his elbow on the desk, he supported his throbbing brow upon his left hand, and wrote as follows:—

“Helen, beloved and adored!—If still I cling to the forms of this world, it is that I may first commit to paper the word that is written in my heart’s core—the sound which is engraved upon my tongue, and liveth around me, as the essence of every thought and action. Helen! oh, how blessed, beautiful, and musical is that treasured name, which seems, to my imagination, to have been formed for thee alone, and borne by none but thee. Again and again I could write it; and, oh! if a happier destiny had made thee mine—if I might have said and called thee *my Helen*—that silvered sound—those simple words—would have embodied in themselves all that could make the wealth or happiness of earth.

“But Helen, adored, beloved, though no longer mine, forgive this wild, this exquisite,

but visionary dream : such thoughts of perfect bliss—perfect as on earth might be—are not fitting for the cell of the condemned : my doom is sealed—Death stands sentinel at the massive door—his hand alone will draw the bolts, and he alone will set me free. In such a spot—at such a moment, all perishable things should pass from sight, and eternity alone employ *our* thoughts ; yes, for I will not—cannot, think it guilty to link the thoughts of heaven with one so pure and perfect as thyself : but for the belief that *there* we might meet to part no more, I should shudder at the bitterness of death ; now I am resigned. ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth,’ and I trust that the frailties of our erring nature will be washed in the blood of the Lamb, and our souls be received to everlasting life. May the great eternal Father which is in heaven bless thee, guide thee, and support thee, until his voice shall call thee to the path I am about to tread.

“ Weep not for me, my Helen, for I have survived the wish to live ; I would not have shrunk from the duties of the world ; I would have striven, as I have done, to play my part,

as Heaven had ordained ; but the desire—the charm of life, perished with the bolt which fell, blasted our hopes, and tore us asunder. Weep not at the manner of my death, for my plea was the truth. *I am not guilty* ; and I could not die in peace unless you knew it, and believed it ; and you, Helen—you, at least, will believe me innocent ; you never yet have doubted my word, and *now* you cannot. Even De la Bere, the noblest, kindest, gentlest being that ever lived—even he has looked as if he thought me guilty, though it were but for a moment—he has, in silence, thought it ; but *you* will never doubt my dying words, and reject the consolation I have to bequeath—Helen, *I am innocent !*

“ The one, the only earthly treasure I possessed, I hoped to carry to the grave : it may not be. To you I return the lock of hair, which, till now, has never left my heart ; it has been hoarded with more than a miser’s care, and been in my solitude and wo as an angel of light ; but this, too, must be no more : the last link which chained me to this world must now be broken, and heaven above

must claim my thoughts : in the mercy of the Father which is in heaven, my hopes must now repose. Adieu, Helen ; farewell for ever, in this dark and dreary world ! Again, farewell ! Adieu, my Helen ! for, till I die, that blessed name must mingle with my prayers !”

De Mowbray had concluded the above, enclosed the lock of hair, and again withdrawn it from the envelope, to press it once more to his lips. This weakness, if such it were, had at length been conquered—the seal had been placed, when the bolts were withdrawn, and De la Bere entered.

It was some time ere either could speak ; De la Bere remarked the traces of sorrow upon De Mowbray’s face, the expression of his features no longer wore that stern uncompromising spirit which had supported him when standing at the bar ; he thought it was the fitting hour to work upon his feelings ; he entreated, he implored him to confide the details of the tragic scene, and say if the dagger were not first raised against his own life.

“ I have spoken the truth, but can tell no more !” replied De Mowbray, with deep but

subdued solemnity; “you will not doubt me when I am dead!”

“Doubt you, Melton! no, no, it is not that; but there is a mystic silence in your manner—a sullen depth of dark despair, which makes me feel you court destruction. Melton, by the love I bear you, by the pure, impassioned love I bore, nay, which still I bear to the memory of your mother, be not so false to your friends, so impious, as to rush on death; for the sake of your poor, unhappy mother, I implore ——”

“My friend—my more than friend, spare your entreaties, and, oh! spare me your reproaches, and doubt me not!” cried De Mowbray, as he convulsively embraced his friend, and gave vent to feelings to which the thought of Lady Helen had paved the way.

De la Bere knew not how to act, or what to think, but he gained nothing by his anxious efforts.

On the morrow he renewed his visit: all that argument, aided by the eloquence of heart, could do, he tried again, but in vain; he sought, to no purpose, for the grounds of

asking mercy, or making out a case of manslaughter. To no purpose he mentioned that fine and imprisonment might easily be borne; the first through his purse, the second by paying the keeper for the apartment so long and lately tenanted by Lord George Gordon.

“In Newgate he died, and so shall I!” answered De Mowbray, with such stern decision, that De la Bere turned away, and wrung his hands in silent agony.

De Mowbray’s heart bled for the pain he had inflicted; he flew to his side, pressed his hands to his lips, asked forgiveness, and, with sad, but sweet persuasion, begged to be left alone, and commune with his God. Broken-hearted, and despairing, De la Bere complied, and, having named the hour of return, he drove to the noble mansion into which the reader has already been admitted.

De la Bere was in his library, distracted, agonised by the dark thoughts which crowded on his mind. “In Newgate he died, and so shall I!” he said to himself, repeating the words which De Mowbray had used. “Were they figurative? or does he look to the aid of

poison? Will his own hand cheat the dread sentence of the law?" were questions which followed each other, and, in the weakness of human love and frailty, he scarcely dared to pray that such might not be done.

A coach drove up, and there was a heavy knock at the door; he rang his bell with violence.

"Not at home to any living soul!" he said to his faithful Jameson, ere the hall-door could be answered.

"Not at home!" echoed a female voice, with the tone of despair, as Jameson fulfilled his orders; "it matters not, I must enter—I must see him—I must find him; Jameson, your master *must* be found!"

And, putting a guinea into the hands of the driver, the urgent visitor descended from the coach. Jameson, startled by hearing his name, looked at the muffled stranger, and exclaimed, with doubt and surprise—

"Is it not my Lady Helen Fawndove?"

"I haven't no change, ma'am!" interrupted coachey, stumping into the hall with his

wooden shoes, and holding out the guinea at arm's length.

“Keep it—keep it all, my good man!” said Lady Helen, in breathless haste.

The precise and honest butler was about to arrange the matter, and take care of the property which the lady seemed so unequal to manage; Lady Helen declined his interference, and again urged her inquiries after Mr. De la Bere, and entreated Jameson to find him immediately.

“I need not go far for that, my lady, and, I am sure, he'd see you if he saw any one; but my poor master is beside himself with grief—it will kill him. They say he's to be hung, my lady; but I dare say you know.”

“I know it—I know it; *he* will die if I do not see him this instant!” cried Lady Helen, who could scarcely refrain from outstepping Jameson, as he went towards the library door.

“How's this?” exclaimed Mr. De la Bere, with a voice wherein sorrow mingled largely with anger, as the door opened, and he saw a female figure immediately behind his butler.

“ It is Lady Helen Fawndove, sir ; and my lady says she must see you immediately.”

“ Helen ! the poor dear Lady Helen !” cried De la Bere, thinking only, for the moment, of what her sufferings must be ; and, without stopping to remove the traces of his own tears, he received her with the affection of a father, and led her to a chair.

There was a pause ere either could summon courage to speak or question their hopes or fears. Mr. De la Bere, always intimate with the Blankisle family, had, with the kindness of his nature, improved the intimacy from the moment he knew of De Mowbray’s attachment ; and since his reverse of fortune, a sort of tacit, yet perfect understanding, had been established between himself and Lady Helen. De Mowbray’s name was rarely, if ever, mentioned directly ; but indirectly, it was felt to be the link of their increased affection.

“ He must not die, for he is innocent !” exclaimed Lady Helen, as she first recovered the power of speech.

“ Would that it were possible to save him !” said De la Bere, as he echoed the feelings of his heart, and sighed to think it might not be.

“ It shall be possible !” cried Lady Helen ; and, as she spoke the words, all traces of weakness passed away ; her full dark eyes flashed with the soul of woman’s courage ; decision sat upon her lovely lips ; the innate firmness of her character was called to life, and written on her lovely brow. “ He is innocent !” she continued, “ for he has said it, and no earthly power shall shake or lessen my belief ; and, knowing this, shall such a life be sacrificed ? Not if I, in the weakness of my nature, can avert the blow. To hesitate, were criminal. Have you no hopes — no power ?”

Mr. De la Bere explained that he had seen the judge and the Secretary of State, and vainly pleaded his conviction that the prisoner, weakened by sickness, and sinking beneath a series of trials, hailed his approaching end with morbid indifference, or pleasure ; that he

had attempted a petition to implore the royal clemency, but had been assured that all would be in vain.

“ Then, alas ! on me alone the lot must fall ; may Heaven supply the strength I need ! They who have condemned unjustly, will owe me gratitude ; they who may deem me bold, will judge with mercy, when they know the truth ; or let the world, the cold and heartless world, condemn, but it shall not weigh my good intentions down. He who is above, who readeth my heart, will bear witness to its purity ; and you, my kind and generous friend, will aid me in the task of saving the life of an innocent man. You, you, at least, will not misjudge me ; for, indeed, my heart is widowed ; it was, it is, it ever must be, his—but he is lost to me for ever ! ”

De la Bere gazed with admiration on the lovely being before him. Her resemblance to De Mowbray has been mentioned ; and now, as her dark eyes kindled with pure, impassioned energy, as, with the majesty of high, yet desperate resolve, she raised her figure to the utmost, years rolled back upon the

past, and he deemed that he looked upon the cherished vision of his heart, on Julia Saladin, as he had known her in the unsullied freshness of youth's imagining; or, rather, as he had imaged her, if then she had passed to heaven and blended an angel's beauty with the form of earth. He read her rightly; with him years had not chilled the romance of woman's purity: he, at least, did not misjudge her.

“No, no!” he said, “not I; but, Helen! dearest, noblest Helen! this time the vision you have raised shall become reality; yes, we will save him, but it shall be to live for you!”

“Never, never! name not the hope, or you unnerve me! If one selfish thought defiled my pure intent, these pale cheeks would burn with the blush of guilt; this hand would tremble, and my strength would fail. Now, I am firm, calm, resolved; and where the stake is life, such must I remain!”

The plan was speedily arranged: Lady Helen, within a little of the receipt of De Mowbray's letter, resolved that his life should be saved, if possible. There was a maiden

aunt, sister of her father, whose house was a second home; to her she repaired, and mentioned her intention of staying for a day or two. To this lady she confided the contents of the letter she had received, and won her to her purpose with that power of persuasion which springs from noble and enthusiastic resolve: she felt she was doing right, and carried that conviction to the bosom of her kind, good aunt. All other chances failing, Lady Helen thought of her resemblance to De Mowbray, and the possibility of favouring his escape. The aunt, young in feeling, though old in years, recalled the romantic history of the Countess de Nithesdale (referred to in our heading), and improved upon the hint. A close bonnet, an outer robe made to slip off in a moment, a large shawl, a second pair of shoes — every thing was prepared. The aunt walked with her niece to a stand of coaches near to Mr. De la Bere's; and, wishing her fervent success, returned to her house, and denied herself to all visitors. Jameson was made a confidant, and instructed to procure the necessary disguise, and have

a carriage in attendance to convey Sir Melton de Mowbray to the retreat which had been fixed upon.

Mr. De la Bere had permission from the Secretary of State to admit himself and one or two more to the prisoner. He visited him alone at the hour he had named, forbore to repeat his former entreaties, and promised to return about sunset. At that hour he handed Lady Helen to his carriage, and drove to Newgate.

They were admitted without any hesitation ; the bolts were withdrawn, the door turned heavily upon its hinges, and discovered the prisoner stretched upon his iron bed, pallid, and insensible to their approach.

“ We come too late ! ” said De la Bere to himself, as again the thoughts of poison, and De Mowbray’s words, rushed to recollection. With an effort almost more than human, he stifled the thought, and said, calmly and lowly, to the keeper, “ He sleeps, leave us to ourselves.”

The door closed.

“ If he sleeps,” said De la Bere, with

agitation he could no longer suppress, “ we must awake him ; and look ! God in his mercy be praised, he does *but* sleep ! Look ! look at the smile which plays upon the bloodless lip ! ” and, giving the lamp to Lady Helen, he bent on one knee, pressed his hand, and whispered, “ Melton ! De Mowbray, awake ! ”

Notwithstanding these precautions, De Mowbray started as if the trumpet of death had sounded ; and then, resting on his arm, gazed at the forms before him. One glance sufficed for the familiar and benignant expression of De la Bere’s face ; he was recognised, and his pressure mechanically returned : but she, the being whose slight and tapered finger held the rude lamp, whose eyes were fixed on his as if they had read the dream he had dreamed — it was, it must be the vision which had, in his sleep, watched and hovered over his head — it must be Helen ! He spoke the word, he called her by that blessed name.

“ Melton ! ” was the faint music of the answer : he sprang from his pallet, and once more they were linked in each other’s arms.

We pass the remainder of the scene ; the tears and generous entreaties which devotion urged. Slowly, but reluctantly, De Mowbray yielded his consent, but not until De la Bere promised that Lady de Mowbray should be removed from England, and kept in ignorance (should she recover) of all that had occurred. His word was pledged, and then, for the first time, did the horrid truth flash across his mind.

The dress was readily effected ; the judge had ordered that the prisoner should not be ironed, so that, on that point, there was no difficulty. Lady Helen, wrapped in the cloth cloak which De Mowbray had thrown aside, sealed her prayers for his safety with the kiss of her last farewell. Once more De Mowbray turned to look upon her lovely features, and the joyous smile which played through the cloud of anxious fears, repaid him for the struggles he had suffered, ere he could yield to her entreaties. De la Bere took the lamp, called the keeper, the door closed. Lady Helen rose from the pallet on which she had reclined ; and, falling on her knees,

breathed forth her prayers to Heaven for the captive's escape.

It would seem as if not only the outward garb, but also the gentler nature of woman, had been transferred to De Mowbray; he was no longer supported by the dignity and sense of a high and generous sacrifice; he reproached himself for weakness; and the thousand contending feelings which wrung his bosom, produced in reality the agitation which he ought to have feigned. So far there was no disguise, it was the truth; in other respects, matters had been so well arranged, that he passed the narrow and winding passages unchallenged: but, whether it were the difference of height, or a something in the gait or carriage of the figure resting on De la Bere's arm, they had scarcely passed the gaoler who admitted them to the prison, when they were called upon to stop. To escape were impossible — they instantly obeyed.

“ For Heaven's sake, be firm ! ” whispered De la Bere, scarcely above his breath; and then, turning to the keeper, who, advancing

with his fellow, was close at hand, he said, "What now, my good friend?"

"I can't tell what, sir; but, somehow, I think there's a something wrong, or queerish here. Let's see!" And the man brought his lamp in front of De Mowbray, and, lowering the handkerchief which he held to his face, looked beneath the bonnet.

With some, self-possession seems quick as instinct, De Mowbray met the gaze unmoved.

"No; d—— it, it can't be, neither!" said the gaoler, as he removed the light. "There is no mistaking them eyes!" and, in his rough mode of civility, he begged the supposed lady's pardon.

They were suffered to pass through the keeper's house; they descended his steps; and, mounting those of the carriage, drove off without further suspicion.

CHAPTER XVI.

EXCHANGE OF PRISONERS, PEACE AND
HAPPINESS.

“ She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies ;
And all that’s best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes :
Thus mellowed to that tender light,
Which Heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impaired the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o’er her face,
Where thoughts serenely sweet express
How pure, how clear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek and o’er that brow
So soft, so calm, so eloquent ;
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent ;
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent.”

BYRON.

ALL that De Mowbray had hitherto suffered,
was nothing to the agony he felt as he thought,

without ceasing, on the gentle being who now occupied the condemned cell. To all things else he felt indifferent, and it was all but mechanically that he was led from the carriage to De la Bere's house.

Jameson had hastened to the carriage-door, and whispered in his master's ear, "Be guarded, sir, the servants are in the hall; and there is one Mr. Bowman here, he says Lady de Mowbray is dead, and he is able to prove Sir Melton innocent! He was raving to see you, and I was obligated to tell him what you were doing."

De la Bere, with De Mowbray still leaning on his arm, had scarcely reached the hall, when the library door was thrown open, and Bowman rushed towards them.

"Thank Heaven, thank Heaven for this!" he exclaimed; and, in the wild overflowings of delight, he put his arm round De Mowbray's neck, pressed his hand to his lips, and, like the father who recovered his long-lost child, he wept for joy.

The servants stared, as well they might, considering De Mowbray's costume. De la

Bere, in an instant, released the apparent lady ; and, having said aloud, “ Sir, you must be mad ! you know not Lady Helen Fawndove ! ” He added, in his ear, “ you will betray us ! ” To which, in the anger of the moment, was added a no very complimentary anathema.

Poor Bowman was instantly recalled to his senses, and looked as sheepish and ashamed as a detected schoolboy ; but when the servants were dispersed, he was admitted to an audience, and pardon cordially granted.

His tale was soon told. Lady de Mowbray — for she was not one of those beings who watch until the breath departs, and, ere the husband’s corpse be cold, wed their seducer, and think such unhallowed marriage can blot out the measure of their crimes ; — Lady de Mowbray, therefore, as we still continue to call her, when under Dr. ——’s care, had passed as the Hon. Mrs. Aston ; and as such alone was she known to him. His care again succeeded in restoring tranquillity of mind, but the sinking of her bodily powers was beyond his skill. Day by day death approached.

With the first dawning of reason, she inquired for her son; the doctor knew of no such person, and feared her mind was wandering. With the cunning so peculiar to madness, she forbore explanation, and begged for the daily papers to amuse her. The truth but too quickly burst upon her senses, but the brain withstood the shock; she felt her end approaching, and, with the high-minded decision of earlier years, she hastened to fulfil the awful task before her. She sent for Bowman, and ordered him to reveal her true situation to Dr. —; she called for the attendance of a magistrate to take and attest her deposition; she questioned her maid-servant, the same who attended her in Palsgrave Passage, and warned her of her son's danger.

This person not only bore witness to the truth of Lady de Mowbray's confession, but was able to speak as to the whole transaction. She had entered the room where her master, Colonel Aston, was sleeping, and was in the act of removing some robe from a large closet, close to the door which led to the colonel's

bedroom, when her attention was caught by seeing the opposite door gently opened. At first, from curiosity, she paused to watch; next, from fear, she continued to do so. She saw Sir Melton enter with his sword, awake the colonel, and heard him demand the satisfaction due from a man of honour, even more fully than has been given. She heard the colonel insist upon fighting immediately, instead of waiting for seconds. Uncertain how to act, she was riveted for a time to the spot, and too much alarmed to call for assistance. At length, however, she escaped unseen, communicated to Lady de Mowbray the scene which was passing, and, following her mistress, she witnessed the fatal blow struck by the poisoned dagger. Hurried, almost immediately, from the house, she had no means of speaking as to the facts she had witnessed; and such was her attachment to her mistress, that nothing short of her dying command would have induced her to reveal the truth.

With that full and perfect possession of intellect which frequently precedes the death of the insane, Lady de Mowbray said and did

all that could exculpate her son ; and, ere Bowman could step into the chaise and four which had been ordered, this frail, this fallen, and unhappy child of earth, had breathed her last.

“ It is not too late ! ” said De Mowbray, in a deep and solemn tone, when these details were finished. “ No earthly power shall prevent it—this night I will sleep in Newgate ! ”

“ Melton ! ” exclaimed Mr. De la Bere, in surprise.

“ Yes, there will I go, and there will I sleep ! But for the blessed form which this garb has touched, I could curse the disguise ; but now I may be myself again.” And De Mowbray cast aside the dress which had favoured his escape.

Mr. De la Bere in vain opposed his decision.

“ My poor mother,” he said, “ is free, and beyond the reach of human power ; for my release there is evidence in store. I may be saved ; and, oh ! above all, that spotless angel, now imprisoned in the cell destined for myself,

may be restored to liberty, and saved from the breath of the black and heartless world."

The carriage in waiting to convey De Mowbray to concealment, drove to the dreary prison from which he had escaped.

Mr. De la Bere entered the keeper's house, and asked permission for himself and friend to visit the prisoner; it was refused: he might be admitted at daybreak on the morrow, but this night it could not be.

"Is it ever too late to receive a prisoner?" asked Mr. De la Bere, speaking in a tone too low to be heard by any but the keeper, and seeing the necessity of confiding the truth.

"No, perhaps not; but what mean you?"

"That the prisoner ordered for execution on the morrow is at large; Sir Melton de Mowbray has escaped!"

"Impossible! but an hour since I saw him sleeping on his bed. What mean you, sir?" exclaimed the keeper, startled, though incredulous.

"I mean that he is even now sitting in the carriage at your door!"

The keeper started, as if about to seek or call for aid.

“Hush! stir not!” said De la Bere quickly, and, laying his hand upon his arm, he added — “He is come to deliver himself up; remove your attendants, and hear me!”

The keeper, a shrewd and intelligent man, saw no better alternative, and obeyed with wonderment.

When alone, Mr. De la Bere continued,— “I would rather this hand were withered than it should bribe you to forget your duty, for I would die sooner than thus insult an honourable man; but though I come to restore one who has already escaped, and claim the liberty of another, against whom there is but the charge of woman’s deep devotion, I must win your silence, and pay the debt of my undying gratitude: there is a check for one hundred guineas, and, while you live, this tribute for the boon I ask shall be yearly paid. Pledge me your word of honour that this heroic act shall never pass your lips: the world can sometimes condemn, where Heaven would approve.

The keeper promised—promised, unconditionally, for he was touched to the heart by the generous act. If the sense of self-interest prompted the wisdom of silence—if his own escape from the charge of negligence or bribery—if joy at retaking the bird which had returned without a lure, mingled with better feelings, who, be it asked, is perfect?"

This point arranged, Mr. De la Bere retired to lead in the willing captive. With profession of scrutiny, the keeper examined his man, and identified Sir Melton de Mowbray.

Mr. De la Bere remained in the parlour, while De Mowbray (as physician to the body or soul), accompanied the keeper to the condemned cell. Lady Helen, startled by the removal of the bolts and locks, threw herself on the wretched pallet, and feigned the repose of sleep, while her throbbing heart, wrung by the fear of De Mowbray's capture, beat as if it would rend in twain the fair walls of its ivory palace.

De Mowbray entered, and, stealing to her side, as fearful to disturb the sleeper, gazed

for an instant on the form enveloped in his cloak.

“Helen!” he said, in his softest, sweetest tone: he fancied she started, but there was no reply; “dearest Helen, all’s well!” he added.

The last words were unheard. With the screech of utter agony she threw back her disguise—she looked on De Mowbray—for an instant her full dark eyes were fixed on his. “Lost! betrayed!” she exclaimed, and, raising her clasped hands on high, she added, with solemn fervour,—“O God, receive my soul!” and, but for De Mowbray, she would have fallen senseless against the prison walls.

Wrapped beneath the ample folds of De Mowbray’s cloak, she was carried to the keeper’s parlour, and given to the charge of De la Bere. Restoratives were applied in vain, and, unconscious of all that was passing, she was restored to the cares of the aunt, whose house she had left in the morning. De Mowbray, confiding in the kindness of those by whom she would be watched, felt happier than if reprieve or pardon had announced his liberty.

“ She is free! she is free!” he repeated, and the narrow gloomy cell, which he now reoccupied, seemed dearer than the chamber of a palace; so little does happiness depend upon aught but our inward selves.

Time was pressing, De la Bere hastened to the Secretary of State, and despatched Bowman with a letter to the judge; a reprieve was promised with the earliest dawn; he returned once more to inform the keeper of the steps he had taken, and, securing a bed at a tavern in St. Paul’s Churchyard, he wandered forth, and hovered, like a good spirit, around the walls which inclosed a world of misery.

To sleep was impossible; he felt that he ought to be happy, but the promise of brighter days was dashed with a thousand anxious fears, and divided by the closing career of her whom he had cherished in his heart, as known in the hour of unsullied youth. The night was dark and lowering—the silence of midnight was broken, as the clock of St. Paul’s proclaimed the hour—the Sabbath had passed—man’s privilege and doom—“ to work,” was renewed; but, oh! how fearfully were the open-

ing hours of another week employed—labourers, called from their early rest, gathered without the walls of Newgate; others issued from within. From time to time gates were thrown open, and the barriers destined to surround the scaffold, were brought forth, and planted in the granite—torches, shedding a lurid and unearthly light, flared amidst increasing darkness, and gave a demon's aspect to those who toiled as the labourers of death.

Hark! there is a shout—a yell—a chorus of discordant voices, urging each other to some greater effort; the gates are thrown wide—the straining horses struggle and answer to the whip—it moves—the fatal drop—the black unwieldy building, with the gibbet high above its blood-stained walls, moves like the car of Juggernath—a seeming solid mass—the granite pavement trembles, and, with the aid of paid or idle hands, it is placed against the felon's door of death.

Mr. De la Bere, supported by the conviction that this time the labour was in vain, felt for a time as if he was riveted to the spot; and then, to turn the current of his thoughts, he bent his

steps to the clamour and confusion of a scene as striking, and less painful, by association.

While the great bulk of population slept within their Mammoth city, the source of nourishment was flowing to its centre—thousands upon thousands of cattle—many (as practised as when the Roman general retreated), with flambeaux on their horns, were driven to a given point, till all seemed “chaos worse confounded”—a dense, impenetrable hecatomb of life—of blood, destined to be shed for the wants of man: what a contrast to the noiseless chambers, in which millions were wrapt in slumber!—the melancholy lowing of the distracted, suffering brutes—the barking of the trained and countless dogs—the yells and curses of the heartless drovers—the bleating of the lambs, mingled in wide and wild distraction, while pitchy torches broke, in fitful glares, the darkness of night, and revealed hundreds busied in casting the lasso, and in passing the yoke of captivity on the bellowing beasts.

Mr. De la Bere, whose love of knowledge had led him to look on most things, had never, till then, witnessed the scene before him; and as he watched “order from confusion spring-

ing," the tedious moments passed more quickly than he had dared to hope. He retired to his bed for an hour, and lying down in his clothes, he arose before the sun.

The promised reprieve arrived. Thousands, assembled "to see how a gentleman would die," blasphemed their Maker, and, with coarse and horrid imprecations, cursed the order which robbed them of their sport. Others, collected by some morbid feeling of curiosity, though disappointed at first, rejoiced ere the day was spent, and strove to forget the loss of a night's rest and guineas paid for a front seat. Bowman accompanied the messenger. Subsequently, a question arose with the judges, whether the case was one of manslaughter or justifiable homicide, and we believe the casting vote was given in favour of the former; but the punishment was so slight that it was soon forgotten, and Sir Melton de Mowbray was restored to life and liberty.

Lady Helen, whom we left under the care of her aunt, did not recover the possession of her faculties for many hours. When she recovered, and found herself surrounded by the comforts of a room she had often occupied,

it was difficult to separate fiction from truth. But her aunt's words poured balm within her bleeding wounds, and dispelled the shadows of some horrid, but disjointed vision, which seemed to haunt her memory.

If the proud and unbending spirit of independence be a fault, even in this respect De Mowbray was yielding to a humbler mood. Though Lady Helen Fawndove's devoted attempts to save his life was a secret within the knowledge of a few, De la Bere urged it as the ground of his being allowed to declare him as his heir, and seal his intentions of making over a large proportion of his estates. He then might renew his suit, and claim the hand of his deliverer.

That misfortunes rarely come singly, is generally allowed: it is not less true, though less freely confessed, that good fortune is apt to follow in the same proportion. While De Mowbray was about to yield to the offer of his generous friend, "old Melton of Melton" did die in reality, and left—unconditionally—to his godson, Sir Melton de Mowbray, the whole of his immense wealth.

With perhaps a something of the inconsist-

ency of human nature, this decided De Mowbray's doubts; and, when he wanted for nothing, he readily acceded to be the heir to much more.

But De la Bere had a more interesting point to carry, and, ere long, he took upon himself an embassy to Lady Blankisle. This proud and uncompromising manœuvrer, like many of her species, had overshot the mark, and was not sorry to return the erring arrow to her quiver. Her consent was quickly won; an extraordinary reaction took place: she was, as formerly, alive to all the amiable qualities which rendered Sir Melton de Mowbray worthy of being her son-in-law, and as such he was accepted.

To say that the happiness of De Mowbray, Lady Helen, and her kind-hearted father, was complete, would be to offer insult to the reader's imagination: it could not be otherwise. We need only add, that our hero was persuaded to relinquish his design of serving in the ill-starred campaign of the Duke of York; and, in lieu thereof, he fought in the ranks of the senate, by the side of the last of the De la Beres.

Our *dramatis personæ* have been few. Some of the few have, in the course of events, been taken from the stage of life. It only remains to say, that when Bowman had paid the last duties of a son devoted to an aged mother, he sighed for employment, and in his way became superlatively happy by being appointed "the city marshal." To see him mounted on his charger, with all its trappings and housings to boot, commanding his myrmidons "to halt," "to wheel," and be the life and soul of some grand procession, was a glorious sight. Marlborough himself never looked half so martial, nor was, we suspect, one quarter so happy. Thanks to old Martha, who had been enlisted in his service, he was as happy in his home as in the field.

William, the last of the De la Beres, lived for many years to look upon the happiness to which his hand, and more—ah, how much more!—his heart, had contributed. To the last, he continued the model of "the old English gentleman." His three sisters preceded him to the grave, and within a little of each other. When they died, it seemed as if the last hallowed relic of a former century had

passed away. Southam, with its quaint corners, its tapestry, and wainscot—its summer-house, straight walks, clipped hedges, and velvet turf, seemed to have lost the soul and character which gave it life. The sisters sleep in the churchyard hard by ; and, to this day, the old peasants remember, with a grateful sigh, the virtues and goodness of the last of that noble family.

One word more on their brother—the noble, if eccentric being, to whom we have but faintly rendered justice. If the heartless, the vicious, the mere dwellers upon earth, bandied their jokes, and with a sneer indulged in calumny, or linked his name with the mother of De Mowbray, it was because his character was above their comprehension. Their gross and impure imaginations could not fathom the finer feelings of one who, having once loved, could admit no second passion,—who clung to the lovely visions of the past, and hived the honey of its early flowers. They had been beautiful, bright, and pure ; as such, they ever dwelt in his memory. He bestowed his affections, he lavished his gifts, on the only child of the fair frail being who to him had once seemed perfect as Eve before her fall.

In conclusion, it may be useful to add, that when in after years Sir Melton was blessed with a family of sons, he took care to bestow on them a more general and useful education than he himself had received.

He often told the story of his own gross ignorance, in thinking Messrs. D'Aubigny and Co. had one huge banking ledger devoted to the "Drs." or "Doctors" of London. Many there are who invent stories, and, by constant repetition, firmly believe they were founded in fact. Sir Melton was the reverse; for, when his sons grew up, and the necessity of the lesson was removed, he began to doubt if it were possible that he had ever been so ignorant. Nevertheless, *it was a fact*; and, what is worse, few—if any—of his fashionable contemporaries were wiser.

It is to be hoped that the heads of our public schools have, in these days, seen the errors of "the good old times," and that each, like a "*médecin malgré lui*," can now, or shortly will, be able to say, "*nous avons changé tout cela*."

Till death, the keeper of Newgate kept the secret: with equal honour the annuity was

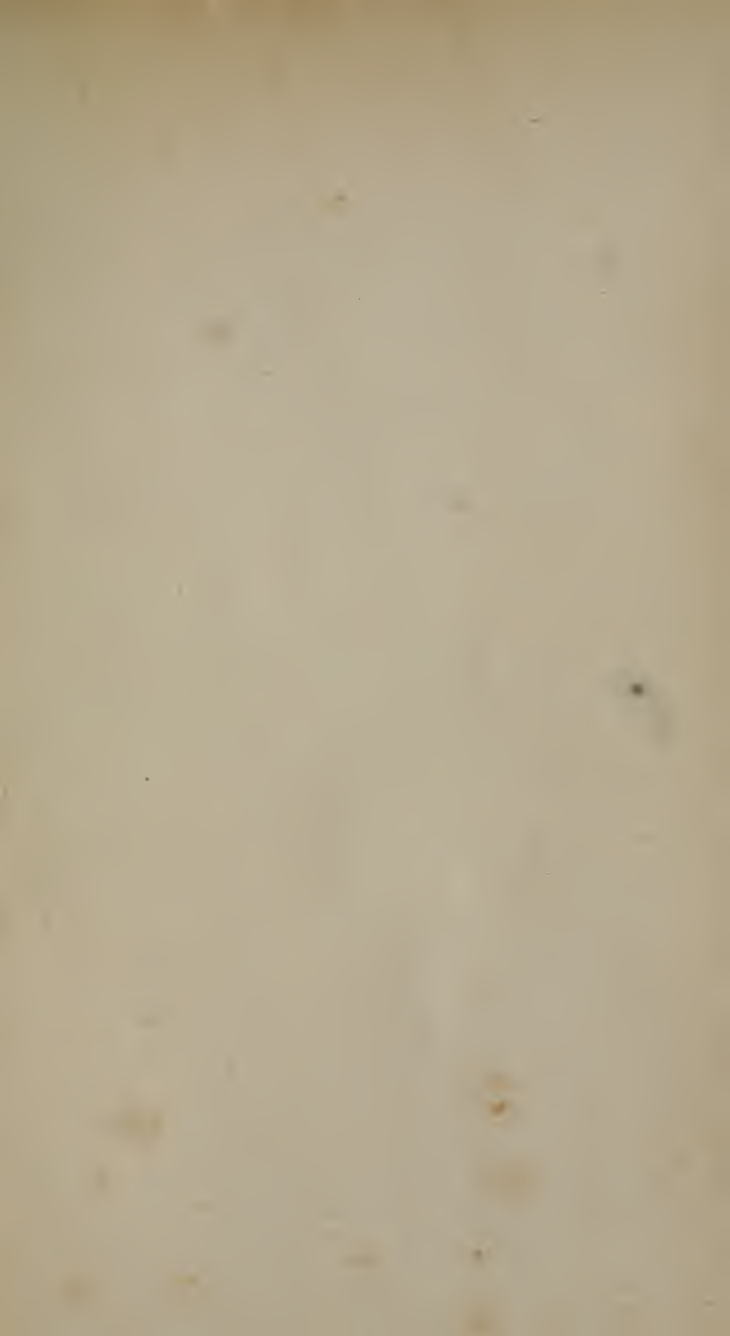
paid. How it came to our knowledge must continue a secret. To the public we have ventured to confide it, and, we hope, to their amusement. May they judge with mercy! is our parting prayer, in favour of our heroine. Yet, ere we part, let us supply one omission. Sir Melton and Lady De Mowbray spent the honeymoon at —— Castle, which, together with some thousand acres, had been presented by Mr. De la Bere as a marriage *cadeau*. Upon arrival, the lodge gates were opened by Mr. Brown, De Mowbray's faithful groom; and ere the castle was reached, his beautiful Arabian "Tedmora," accompanied by a foal rich in the promise of its dam, answered to De Mowbray's call, neighed with wild delight, and galloped up to be introduced to the lady of the castle.

THE END.

LONDON:

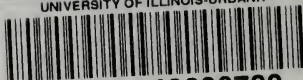
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